BC MINING LAW REFORM

Debunking Myths: “Critical Minerals” and the Energy Transition

Overview

As British Columbia moves toward a low-carbon future, energy transition minerals will have a key role to play. However, mining these minerals carries significant social, environmental, and cultural risks—especially for Indigenous and rural communities.

As these minerals become increasingly central to the clean energy transition, there is a growing risk that simplified or misleading narratives—often pushed by government and industry—obscure both the significant impacts from mining, and the real gaps in tracing the end uses of mined materials. “Critical minerals” are also increasingly sought for military and weapons applications, underscoring how mining is deeply entangled with geopolitics, security, and militarization — raising further questions about who benefits and who bears the environmental and social costs.

In Canada, the push for “critical minerals” has mostly been narrowly focused on mining more without exploring efficiencies, alternative supply sources, substitutions, recycling capacity, re-mining potentials, and really developing a holistic strategy to build the clean energy transition without exacerbating mining impacts. Additionally, B.C. has limited refining or processing capacity for critical minerals—leaving B.C. with the environmental impacts while value-added economic benefits occur elsewhere and undercutting claims that more extraction will strengthen local or domestic supply chains.

This resource supports environmental, community, justice groups, and other stakeholders in B.C. seeking to understand and respond to pressures from “critical mineral” development. It aims to help challenge the prevailing narrative that rapid mining expansion is necessary for a clean energy transition and to propose solutions that reduce the need for new mines.

Guiding Principles for Responsible Narrative:

Use these guiding principles when discussing critical minerals — each is essential to a responsible approach:

- 🔽 Reduce demand — through reuse, public transit, and product redesign.
- 🔁 Recover resources — via recycling and re-mining waste.
- 🤔 Rethink extraction — focus only on what's necessary.
- ⚖️ Respect Indigenous governance — consent is non-negotiable.
- 🚫 Reject greenwashing — truth matters more than speed.

Quick Reference/Table of Contents:

Below is a summary of common claims about "critical minerals" along with suggested responses. Each is expanded upon with resources and facts further below.

❌ **Claim 4: "Electric vehicles (EVs) are the silver bullet to solving the climate crisis — we just need more critical minerals to build them."**
🧭 **Suggested Response:**
EVs alone cannot solve the climate crisis. Relying solely on EV production ignores broader systemic changes needed to reduce overall resource demand and emissions.
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❌ **Claim 5: "British Columbia has world-class regulations — we can mine responsibly."**
🧭 **Suggested Response:** While B.C. promotes its mining sector as world-leading in sustainability, significant regulatory gaps, environmental impacts, and unresolved Indigenous rights concerns challenge that narrative.
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❌ **Claim 6: "If not here, mining will just happen somewhere worse."**
🧭 **Suggested Response:**
This argument enables harm. Canada must lead by example, not lower its standards.
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❌ **Claim 7: "Critical mineral development will advance reconciliation."**
🧭 **Suggested Response:**
Reconciliation is not a licence for extraction. True reconciliation is measured by Indigenous Peoples' ability to say yes, no, or not yet—on their own terms.
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❌ **Claim 8: "Everyone benefits from critical mineral mining."**
🧭 **Suggested Response:**
The harms from mining are often borne locally and unequally, especially by Indigenous and rural communities, while the economic benefits tend to be concentrated among shareholders and outside industries.
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❌ **Claim 9: Regulatory requirements are the key obstacle to mining projects in B.C.**
🧭 **Suggested Response:**
Evidence shows that regulation is rarely the main barrier—economic factors are far more influential.
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❌ **Claim 10: “We need to act fast — critical minerals can’t wait.”**
🧭 **Suggested Response:**
Urgency is no excuse to bypass consent and safeguards.
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10 Common “Critical Minerals” Myths

❌ Claim 1: “All minerals labeled as 'critical' are inherently essential for the energy transition.”

🧭 Suggested Response:

Not all minerals designated as “critical” are essential for the energy transition; the term is broad and includes many minerals that have substitutes or serve non-climate-related purposes.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

Not all minerals designated as "critical" are indispensable for the energy transition or lack viable substitutes. The term "critical" is often applied broadly, encompassing minerals that may serve niche industrial or military purposes rather than being essential for decarbonization or clean energy technologies. This broad categorization can obscure priorities and lead to unnecessary environmental and social costs.

Broad and Political Definition of “Critical”:

- The classification of minerals as “critical” varies by country and is shaped by economic, geopolitical, and industrial interests, not solely by necessity for the energy transition.
- For example, Canada’s "critical minerals" list includes over 30 minerals, some of which are primarily used in luxury goods, digitization, or military sectors rather than clean energy technologies.
- To be considered a critical mineral in Canada, the federal government has established that a mineral must meet both of the following criteria:
  - the supply chain is threatened; and
  - there is a reasonable chance of the mineral being produced by Canada.

- It must also meet one of the following criteria:
  - be essential to Canada's economic or national security;
  - be required for the national transition to a sustainable low-carbon and digital economy; and
  - position Canada as a sustainable and strategic partner within global supply chains.

Some advocacy and frontline community groups, as well as industry and policy stakeholders, prefer the term "transition minerals" given that many of the "critical minerals" listed are also used for military purposes, telecommunications, and general industrial purposes and infrastructure.

Military and National-Security Demand Is Often Overlooked:

- While often framed as essential for clean-energy technologies, many "critical minerals" are also prioritized for military and national-security purposes:
- Governments classify several minerals as "strategic defence resources", not just transition materials.
- Agencies such as the U.S. Department of War have begun directly investing in mining companies in B.C. to secure supply for weapons systems and military technologies.
- This demand reflects geopolitical and security interests, often exacerbating climate impacts and shifting away the supply of minerals for renewable energy.
- Military-driven extraction pressures raise questions about who benefits from mining versus who bears environmental, cultural, and social harms.

Prioritization within the "Critical Minerals" List:

- Among the broad list, only a handful—such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, graphite, and rare earth elements (REEs)—are prioritized for their direct role in clean energy supply chains.
- This was the main impetus for countries to develop "critical mineral" strategies over the last decade given commitments for the energy transition, supply constraints of many of these, and high concentration of some these priority elements in certain countries (eg. most cobalt is mined in the Congo, and China processes 90 per cent of REEs).
- Even within this list, elements, such as copper, have broad applications and are not vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. Copper also maintains its properties when recycled.

- Other minerals, like gold or silver, are not "critical minerals" as they do not meet most countries' criteria to be deemed critical and there's enough supply for their tech applications.

Substitutes and Technological Innovations:

- Research and development are advancing alternatives and substitutions to some critical minerals.
- For instance, sodium-ion batteries could reduce demand for lithium; alternative materials may replace certain rare earth elements in magnets and electronics, lowering pressure on specific critical mineral supplies.
- This reinforces that the "critical" status is not fixed and evolves over time with technology and innovation, among other things.

❌ Claim 2: "We must expand mining to meet growing demand for "critical minerals" — there's no alternative."

🧭 Suggested Response:

Not all "critical minerals" need to come from new mines. We need a hierarchy of solutions that reduces harm.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

Governments and industry often claim that new mines are essential for reaching net-zero climate goals. But we need a transition to a clean energy future where broader solutions help reduce the need for new mines and we meet much of the demand for "critical minerals" through smarter, less harmful alternatives like recycling, reuse, and reducing consumption. Yet, *The Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy* focuses almost exclusively on new extraction, overlooking opportunities to scale recycling, reprocessing, and reuse.

Governments often promote mining as essential for climate targets, but existing alternatives are viable and missing as priorities in the current strategies:

1. Re-mining Old Sites and Tailings

- Valuable minerals can be recovered from old mine waste (tailings and waste rock). This reduces the environmental impacts of past mining and limits the need to disturb new ecosystems.
- There are some initiatives under way in B.C. to remine abandoned mine sites and tailings toward restoration (although these have mostly been for gold).
- Yet, Canada's "critical minerals" strategy does not mention re-mining.

2. Recycling and Reuse (Urban Mining)

- E-waste contains high concentrations of valuable metals (e.g., copper, gold, rare earths).
- If countries meet their climate pledges, scaling up recycling could reduce the demand for new mining by approximately 40 percent for copper and cobalt, and 25 percent for lithium and nickel by 2050.
- B.C.'s Moment Energy reuses EV batteries for backup power units and the province also has some EV battery recycling capacity (for lithium) and should focus on investing in more to secure supply.

3. Improved Tech and Design Efficiency

- Adopting circular economy principles in product design can further minimize the need for new mining, such as the EU's single charger rules.
- Encouraging/requiring manufacturers to create products with longer lifespans, clear labelling, and easy disassembly boosts reuse and recycling, cutting demand for new critical minerals.
- Supporting repair and reuse policies further extends product life and reduces the need for new mining.
- Advanced sorting tech increases the quality and volume of recycled materials.
- Putting policies in place for smaller EVs ultimately results in need for fewer resources.

4. Land Use Reform & Reduced Consumption

- Relying on EVs alone is not enough — reducing car dependency is key by investing in active and public transit.

- Integrating land use planning to encourage denser, transit-friendly, and walkable communities can significantly reduce the need for personal vehicle use and thus the demand for critical minerals.

B.C. lacks refining capacity

- B.C. also lacks the refining and processing capacity needed to turn mined minerals into materials used in batteries or clean-energy technologies.
- Most minerals mined in the province must be shipped overseas—primarily to China—for processing before they can enter supply chains.
- This undermines claims that more B.C. mining will strengthen "domestic" materials security.
- Without processing capacity, increasing extraction does not ensure Canadian or B.C. access to battery materials or solar panels, and instead reinforces dependence on foreign refineries.

Demand Isn't Only About Clean Energy — It's Also About Military Supply Chains

Projections of rising "critical mineral" demand often blend climate needs with military and weapons priorities:

- Many minerals on "critical" lists are used in weapons systems, surveillance technologies, and defence manufacturing.
- The U.S. Department of War and other governments are actively funding mining projects to secure access to these materials.
- Given the dominance of China for a number of strategic minerals, there are also moves from the U.S. to secure more "critical minerals" as part of its bilateral transactions (for example, with Ukraine and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
- This means mining expansion may serve geopolitical and military objectives as much as, or even more than clean-energy goals.
- These drivers are often omitted from public narratives, obscuring the real forces behind new extraction pressure.
- Ignoring the military component risks falsely framing mining as solely a climate necessity.

❌ Claim 3: “Mining "critical minerals" is better than fossil fuels — it’s green.”

🧭 Suggested Response:

“Cleaner” does not mean clean. While mining supports the shift away from fossil fuels, it still causes significant and lasting environmental and social harm.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

While mining "critical minerals" plays a role in reducing reliance on fossil fuels, it is important to recognize that mining itself is not without significant environmental and social consequences. Understanding the full scope of mining’s impacts helps avoid oversimplified claims that it is inherently “green” or harmless. While there are many, below are a few key impacts:

Water Pollution:

- Tailings and waste rock from mining contain heavy metals and toxic substances that can leach into waterways, threatening drinking supplies and aquatic species like salmon.
- The 2014 Mount Polley tailings dam failure released approximately 25 million cubic metres of contaminated slurry into Quesnel Lake and surrounding rivers, impacting salmon habitats and threatening Indigenous food security.
- As illustrated at Red Chris, seepage and selenium pollution can impact water quality and fish and fish habitat.

Long-Lasting Hazards:

- In 2022, the total volume of tailings being stored at B.C. mines was conservatively estimated to be 2.5 billion cubic metres, based on government and mining industry data.
- These tailings remain environmentally hazardous long after mining operations cease, requiring ongoing monitoring and management to prevent acid mine drainage and heavy metal contamination.

Ecosystem Impacts:

- Mining operations lead to habitat fragmentation and damage to vital carbon sinks such as wetlands and peatlands. These ecosystems store large amounts of carbon and support biodiversity.
- In British Columbia, mining exploration and extraction affect thousands of hectares annually, contributing to ecosystem degradation.

Case Study: Elk Valley Coal Mining

The Elk Valley region, home to extensive coal mining, faces ongoing challenges with water contamination and air pollution impacting local Indigenous and rural communities. The Ktunaxa Nation and neighboring groups have raised concerns about these health and environmental impacts, underscoring the urgent need for robust environmental oversight, stricter regulations, and community-led remediation efforts.

Reuse vs. Initial Harm:

- Unlike fossil fuels, many "critical minerals" can be recycled and reused, which helps reduce future extraction demand. However, the initial mining causes irreversible environmental impacts and creates legacies that communities must manage for generations.
- New mine sites often require infrastructure like roads and powerlines that further fragment and impact habitat and waterways. Remining brown sites offers a potential source with fewer impacts.

❌ Claim 4: “Electric vehicles (EVs) are the silver bullet to solving the climate crisis — we just need more ‘critical minerals’ to build them.”

🧭 Suggested Response:

EVs alone cannot solve the climate crisis. Relying solely on EV production ignores broader systemic changes needed to reduce overall resource demand and emissions.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

While EVs reduce tailpipe emissions compared to fossil fuel cars, their manufacture requires significant amounts of "critical minerals" like lithium, cobalt, and nickel. Policies to incentivize EV adoption and reduce combustion engines propelled a surge in mining demand. Industry and governments often frame EVs as a clean, straightforward climate solution, but this narrative overlooks some important facts:

1. High Mineral Intensity:

- EV batteries contain large quantities of minerals extracted through environmentally and socially impactful mining.
- In 2022, about 60 percent of lithium, 30 percent of cobalt and 10 percent of nickel demand was for EV batteries.

2. Recycling and Reuse Are Underutilized:

- Only a small fraction of EV batteries are recycled today, despite their valuable content.
- Scaling recycling and reuse can dramatically reduce new mining needs, but Canada's current policies and infrastructure lag behind other jurisdictions like the European Union.
- Canada has no national policy or producer responsibility system for EV battery recycling, leaving end-of-life management unclear and inconsistent.
- British Columbia initially planned to regulate EV battery recycling by 2026 but has since paused those plans, likely due to technical challenges or lack of federal alignment.

3. EVs Don't Address Car Dependency:

- The focus on EV adoption ignores the broader problem of personal vehicle dependence.
- Cities with sprawling development patterns require large numbers of vehicles and extensive infrastructure, increasing total resource demand and emissions.
- EVs are not equally accessible to all populations. Without reducing reliance on private vehicles through public transit and shared mobility, EVs risk entrenching inequalities and sustaining high resource demand.

4. Alternative Mobility & Land Use Solutions:

- Compared with an EV vehicle, a bus is more than nine times more efficient in lithium, while an eBike is a jaw-dropping 240 times more efficient. We would be better off focusing on EV buses and bicycles, as well as smaller vehicles to succeed at transitioning away from combustion engines.
- Studies show that combining EV adoption with land use reforms—such as denser urban planning, public transit, and active transportation (walking, biking)—can reduce demand for "critical minerals" by decreasing the total number of vehicles needed.
- A study by the Climate and Community Project found that increasing metropolitan area density and investing in mass transit can reduce cumulative demand for lithium by 18 to 66 percent.

5. Hidden Emissions in EV Production:

- EV production often relies on electricity generated from fossil fuels, especially where supply chains are global or remote. Although not a factor in B.C., some electrical grids rely heavily on coal and/or natural gas which emit GHGs for charging vehicles.
- Mining operations themselves contribute significant greenhouse gas emissions.

❌ Claim 5: “British Columbia has world-class regulations — we can mine responsibly.”

🧭 Suggested Response:

While B.C. promotes its mining sector as world-leading in sustainability, significant regulatory gaps, environmental impacts, and unresolved Indigenous rights concerns challenge that narrative.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

B.C. often positions itself as a global leader in responsible mining, highlighting its

clean electricity grid, modern regulations, and environmental values. But the province's record reveals significant contradictions. From toxic mine waste and deregulation to legacy pollution and weakened Indigenous rights, B.C.'s "responsible mining" image often masks deeper systemic failures.

1. Legacy Disasters and Environmental Harm

- The Mount Polley disaster in 2014 spilled 25 million cubic metres of tailings into salmon habitat. The dam failure was linked to poor oversight and an inadequate regulation model.
- There are many more examples of mines impacting the environment, including Tulsequah Chief leaked acid mine drainage for over 65 years into the Taku watershed and is only now on a pathway to clean up; Yellow Giant's gold mine dumped tailings and waste water off Banks Island impacting ecosystems and the Gitxaała's seafood harvests.
- Mines in B.C. are currently storing 2.5 billion cubic metres of liquid mine waste, which is equivalent to one million Olympic-sized swimming pools. This volume is expected to increase by 75% with the addition of 11 new mines. The height and storage capacity of tailings facilities in B.C. have been increasing exponentially over time, meaning they are getting increasingly riskier.
- One in four B.C. mine sites with tailings dams use a riskier construction type—upstream dam construction—which has twice as many stability issues than downstream constructed tailings dams. Upstream dams are banned in other jurisdictions but still permitted in B.C.

2. Toxic Pollution from Abandoned and Active Sites

- Reports like The Dirty Dozen identify heavily polluting mine sites in B.C. that still leak toxic metals into waterways, years or decades after operations ended.
- Several mines, including Teck's Elk Valley and Copper Mountain, have been cited for persistent water pollution, particularly selenium contamination, which has adversely affected aquatic ecosystems and communities.

3. Deregulation Through Bill 15

- In 2024, B.C. passed Bill 15, allowing the province to fast-track major projects with limited environmental review.

- While the government has claimed the legislation is intended to fast track urgent infrastructure projects like hospitals and schools, Premier David Eby has acknowledged the Bill could be used to expedite mining projects.
- Critics argue this undermines transparency and consultation, and undermines the original intent of the bill for public benefit projects.

4. Weak Enforcement and Monitoring

- There is a noted lack of adequate monitoring and enforcement of environmental regulations, with insufficient penalties for non-compliance, leading to repeated environmental violations by mining operations.
- B.C. uses a controversial system where mining companies hire their own experts to assess environmental compliance. This model, blamed for Mount Polley, reduces accountability.

5. Lack of Indigenous Consent

- B.C.'s outdated *Mineral Tenure Act* (MTA) allows mineral claims without Indigenous consent. A 2023 court decision ordered B.C. to consult First Nations before staking, inline with the Constitution, but broader MTA reform is slow.
- British Columbia has committed to respecting Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in mining through the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) via the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), but challenges remain in fully realizing these commitments in practice.

❌ Claim 6: "If not here, mining will just happen somewhere worse."

🧭 Suggested Response:

This argument enables harm. Canada must lead by example, not lower its standards.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

Harm caused or contributed to by Canadian mining companies and their subsidiaries and contractors overseas is globally extensive and persistent. Canadian mining companies operate in approximately 100 foreign countries. In 2022, the value of Canadian mining assets abroad totalled $188 billion, and accounted for about two thirds of the total value of Canadian mining assets.

Despite this scale, their activities overseas have caused widespread environmental damage, human rights abuses, Indigenous rights violations, and economic harm. These impacts create serious, lasting challenges for affected communities and countries.

Ethical leadership requires consent-based, rights-respecting mining practices, prioritizing environmental protection and Indigenous rights. Simply shifting mining to countries with lower standards does not reduce global harm; it externalizes environmental and social costs to vulnerable communities, often increasing conflict and inequity. Instead, Canada's role should be to raise the bar globally by demonstrating responsible mining.

❌ Claim 7: "Critical mineral development will advance reconciliation."

🧭 Suggested Response:

Reconciliation is not a licence for extraction. True reconciliation is measured by Indigenous Peoples' ability to say yes, no, or not yet—on their own terms.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

While critical mineral development is often promoted as a pathway to reconciliation, many Indigenous Nations in British Columbia continue to experience resource projects proceeding without their Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Legal challenges and court decisions have exposed significant gaps between government promises and on-the-ground realities. True reconciliation requires meaningful Indigenous decision-making authority, adequate capacity funding, and the legal power to refuse projects that threaten their rights and territories.

Legal Challenges to Free Entry Mining

- The Gitxaała Nation has filed lawsuits against the B.C. government, arguing that provincial laws such as free mining provisions in the *Mineral Tenure Act* allow mining claims on Indigenous lands without securing FPIC, conflicting with commitments under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP).
- In 2023, the BC Supreme Court ruled that the Province needs to change its free entry mineral claim system to conform to the Canadian Constitution's section 35 requirement for Indigenous consultation.
- In 2025, the BC Court of Appeal ruled that UNDRIP and the mineral claims regime are inconsistent.

Cumulative Impacts and Treaty Rights

- The Blueberry River First Nations successfully argued in B.C. Supreme Court that over 84 percent of their traditional territory has been affected by industrial activities, including mining, breaching their Treaty 8 rights.
- The court recognized inadequate provincial management of cumulative effects impacting Indigenous rights.

Ongoing Mining Without FPIC

- Despite court rulings and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) enacted in 2019, mining projects continue to advance without full Indigenous consent.
- In the past year alone, the province has denied Environmental Assessments for Record Ridge mine, Copper Mountain expansion, Mount Polley Spring Pit expansion, and Highland Valley Copper expansion, all despite requests from Indigenous nations to the EAO to have more thorough reviews.
- In 2020, about 5,000 new mineral claims were staked without Indigenous communities' knowledge or approval.
- In March 2025, a new *Mineral Claims Consultation Framework* was created to respond to the Gitxaala ruling requiring prospectors to apply for mineral claims to allow the BC Government to fulfill its duty to consult. However, the system falls far short of FPIC.

Calls for Meaningful Reform:

- Indigenous leaders emphasize the need to move beyond consultation towards true consent, calling for legal reforms that empower Indigenous governance, ensure capacity funding, and grant the right to say no to projects threatening their lands and cultures.
- The BC government has committed to repeal and replace the *Mineral Tenure Act* in cooperation with Indigenous peoples but has yet to advance this commitment (and is pushing back on the recent Court of Appeal ruling).

❌ Claim 8: "Everyone benefits from critical mineral mining."

🧭 Suggested Response:

The harms from mining are often borne locally and unequally, especially by Indigenous and rural communities, while the economic benefits tend to be concentrated among shareholders and outside industries.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

Although critical mineral mining is often portrayed as a driver of economic prosperity for all, the negative impacts are frequently borne unevenly by Indigenous peoples and local rural communities. These groups face significant environmental, health, and social challenges, while the economic benefits tend to be concentrated among mining companies and investors. The promises of long-term local jobs and revenues are often overstated or fail to materialize for many residents.

Disproportionate Impacts on Indigenous Communities

- Mining operations often proceed without Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) from Indigenous nations, infringing on Indigenous rights and governance, as evidenced by the successful legal challenge brought against the Province by Gitxaała First Nation.
- Environmental harms such as water contamination, habitat destruction, and loss of culturally important lands jeopardize food security and traditional ways of life.

- The landmark *Blueberry River First Nations v. BC (2021)* case highlighted how cumulative industrial impacts, including mining, violate treaty rights.
- Indigenous communities often face structural barriers to participating fully in mining benefits, including lack of funding for capacity building and limited negotiating power.
    - Meaningful benefit-sharing agreements and capacity funding are rare, undermining Indigenous self-determination and economic development.

Impacts on Local Communities

- Rural communities adjacent to mining sites often experience environmental degradation, including air and water pollution, noise, and landscape disruption. These impacts can harm local ecosystems, agriculture, fisheries, and tourism industries.
- For example, decades of coal mining by Teck in the Elk Valley have resulted in pervasive selenium contamination in local waterways, threatening fish populations and human health.
    - A report estimates cleanup could cost at least C$6.4 billion, far exceeding the C$1.9 billion in reclamation security that Teck currently holds.
- Mines can also put stress on community resources, such as roads and water systems, as well as on social supports, like hospitals and policing. Small communities have long advocated for more revenue from resource development to offset impacts.

Economic Benefits Are Concentrated and Often Overstated

- Most profits from mining flow to shareholders and corporate stakeholders, rather than local communities. Mining companies often prioritize dividends and capital returns over investing in local infrastructure, services, or community development.
- Local job opportunities are often overstated and under delivered. Across 27 mines studied that received environmental assessment certificates between 1995 and 2022 (including non-operational ones), actual employment was significantly lower than projections—an 82 percent shortfall.
- Many mining operations—especially in remote regions—rely heavily on FIFO (Fly-In, Fly-Out)/DIDO (Drive-In, Drive-Out) labour models. This practice brings workers in from outside communities rather than supporting local hiring.

- Mining's "boom-and-bust" economic cycles can destabilize local economies. Once mines close, communities often face job losses and diminished economic activity without sufficient diversification or lasting investments, which intensifies economic vulnerability.
    - The mining sector is also heavily subsidized with tax incentives, subsidies and flow-through tax shares for investors, as well as with public infrastructure (like road development and powerlines).

❌ Claim 9: Regulatory requirements are the key obstacle to mining projects in B.C.

🧭 Suggested Response:

Evidence shows that regulation is rarely the main barrier—economic factors are far more influential to project delays.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

The prevailing narrative that regulatory red tape stifles mining in B.C. is not supported by data. Delays and underperformance are overwhelmingly tied to economic realities—not bureaucracy. Addressing issues like price volatility, financial risk, and realistic forecasting may be far more impactful than deregulation.

Audited Evidence Disproves the "Red Tape" narrative

- A peer-reviewed audit of 27 B.C. mines approved between 1995 and 2022 found that, while many projects were delayed or never opened, regulatory hurdles were cited as an impediment in only a few cases.
- Of the 27 mines approved via EA in B.C. between 1995 and 2022, 13 never went into production.
- Among these non-operational mines, regulatory delays were a factor in just two instances, and in one case (Murray River) regulatory issues were only one among multiple contributing factors.
- Most delays were attributed to economic factors like commodity price fluctuations and financing challenges. Notably, average environmental assessment (EA) timelines were around 3.5 years.

- On average, mines in BC complete the EA process in under 4 years, which is already faster than many other provinces, territories, and federal assessments.
- In the past year alone (or 2024-2025), the Province denied requested Environmental Assessments for Record Ridge mine and expansions at Highland Valley Copper, Copper Mountain and Mount Polley, despite valid concerns raised by Indigenous governments and community groups about proponent EA evasion at Record Ridge and existing and future environmental impacts at the other mines.
- The current system is failing communities and already allowing mines to bypass more rigorous review.

Overpromised Benefits Compound the Issue

- A study, published in the Royal Society of Canada journal FACETS revealed that B.C. mines consistently underperformed economically. On average:
  - actual production was 77 percent lower than company forecasts;
  - employment fell short by 82 percent;
  - and projected tax revenues were effectively wiped out—coming in 100 percent below expectations.
- These performance gaps suggest that the real issue lies in market viability, not regulations.
- Industry concerns don't match the data. While mining industry groups continue to push for streamlined permitting—labeling regulations as too slow or unpredictable—the audit findings challenge that claim.

❌ Claim 10: "We need to act fast — critical minerals can't wait."

🧭 Suggested Response:

Urgency is no excuse to bypass consent and safeguards.

📌 Truth & Evidence:

Amid shifting geopolitics and the U.S.-Canada trade war, B.C. is pushing "critical minerals" as a political leverage point, rushing to approve mining projects with

promises of shielding the economy—despite ongoing environmental, health, and Indigenous rights concerns. Acting swiftly on critical mineral development without proper safeguards carries serious risks that can undermine Indigenous rights, long-term infrastructure planning, and environmental responsibility.

Violating Indigenous Rights

- Canada's latest federal law fast-tracks "national interest" resource projects, giving Cabinet sweeping powers—including Henry VIII clauses—to selectively bypass laws.
- Critics warn this approach sidesteps constitutional obligations to consult and accommodate Indigenous Peoples and threatens hard-won reconciliation work.
- Similar criticisms have been levied against Bill 15 in British Columbia, which could open the door to fast-tracked critical mineral projects in the province.

Locking in Poorly Planned Infrastructure

- Speeding through environmental assessments and permitting may accelerate initial progress, but it often leads to suboptimal project outcomes and long-term liabilities.
- A MiningWatch Canada analysis argues that bypassing rigorous permitting exposes the public to greater environmental disasters and clean-up costs, with negligible gains in mineral output.

Creating Public Cleanup Costs

- The Auditor General's office has flagged that Canada's "critical minerals" Strategy lacks a proper assessment of its environmental and social risks.
- Without this due diligence, Canadians may be left footing the bill for ecosystem damages, carbon impacts, and cancellations of projects that were rushed through.

Unassessed Climate & Reconciliation Impacts

- The Commissioner of the Environment & Sustainable Development emphasized that the Strategy has not been analyzed against climate commitments or

reconciliation benchmarks—raising concerns about whether accelerated mining may contradict or undermine broader societal goals.

We urgently need a transition to a clean energy future where mining impacts are minimized instead of exacerbated, and broader solutions help reduce the need for new mines.

📢 Have questions? We're here to support you.

📩 Contact the BCMLR team at info@reformbcmining.ca.

🤝 Ensuring Responsible "Critical Mineral" Development — Together

Critical minerals may play a key role in the clean energy transition, but their development carries significant social, environmental, and cultural risks—particularly for Indigenous and rural communities.

As government and industry promote simplified narratives, it's vital to recognize and address the deeper impacts involved and to explore alternatives to new "critical mineral" mines that are currently being overlooked. Together, we can help ensure transition mineral development in B.C. is more responsible and equitable.