



Permit Times for Mining Exploration in 2017

by Ashley Stedman and Kenneth P. Green

Since 1997, the Fraser Institute has collected information from mining company executives, who evaluate mining policies in jurisdictions around the world. One theme that regularly appears in the comments we receive as part of that survey is a perception that permit-times—the length of time it takes to get approval for mining exploration—has grown longer and more onerous over the years. Based on the perceptions of respondents, Canadian jurisdictions, on average, are falling behind on the majority of measures when compared to their international competitors. British Columbia, in particular, appears to be a laggard on some measures, along with the territories. Respondents indicated that not only were they waiting longer to receive their permits than they were in competing provinces like Ontario and Quebec, but British Columbia also offered less certainty throughout the permitting process.

On one of the dimensions of permit-times that we asked respondents to assess—how long it takes to receive the necessary permits—85% of respondents in Quebec, 71% of respondents in Ontario, and 61% of respondents in British Columbia indicated that they received the necessary permits in six months or less. Canadian jurisdictions, on average, performed better on this measure when compared to competing jurisdictions.

The results indicate that permit approval times over the last ten years are lengthening in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec when compared to last year's results. In 2017, 83% of respondents in Ontario said that permit times had lengthened (over the last ten years) compared to 73% in British Columbia and 50% in Quebec. On average, more respondents in the Canadian jurisdictions indicated that permit times were lengthening (over the last ten years) compared to respondents in Australia and Scandinavia.

When asked about transparency in the permitting process, 50% of respondents in Ontario, 48% of respondents in British Columbia, and 40% of respondents in Quebec cited a lack of transparency as a deterrent to investment. In contrast, only 9% of respondents in Sweden and Western Australia saw the level of transparency as a deterrent to investment. This is an area where many Canadian jurisdictions performed poorly compared to their counterparts in the United States, Australia, and Scandinavia.

As with transparency, a number of the jurisdictions in the United States, Australia, and Scandinavia outperformed many of the Canadian jurisdictions in providing confidence that the necessary permits would be granted. On this measure, Quebec and Ontario perform better than British Columbia, and Western Australia performs better than all three jurisdictions. Specifically, in Quebec and Ontario, 90% and 88% of

respondents indicated that they were either highly confident or confident that they would receive the necessary permits, compared to 73% in British Columbia.

Based on the evidence from the survey, many Canadian jurisdictions are lagging behind their international competitors for increases in the time to permit approval, transparency, and confidence that permits will be granted. As a result, Canada's provinces and territories certainly have room to improve their exploration permitting processes. Policy reform in these areas may help Canada's provinces and territories unlock their considerable mineral potential.



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Percentage of respondents from select jurisdictions citing transparency as a deterrent to investment in 2017

