



**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Environmental groups take Feds to the Supreme Court**

*Canada's highest court hears case defending public participation in environmental reviews*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Ottawa, ON – This Friday, the Supreme Court of Canada will consider whether the federal government acted unlawfully by excluding public input from its evaluation of the controversial proposed Red Chris Mine – a massive project that would turn a northern lake into a dumping ground for toxic mining waste. The appeal could determine the fate of a number of Canadian lakes currently threatened by mining proposals, by ensuring more rigorous environmental assessments with mandatory public participation.

“We’ve taken this case to the highest court to protect the public’s right to participate in the assessment of industrial projects; in this case, one that would turn a lake into a toxic dump,” said Lara Tessaro, a lawyer with Ecojustice who represents MiningWatch Canada in the case.

The Red Chris mine site is near Iskut in north-western British Columbia, 450 kilometres north of Smithers. The proposed massive open-pit copper and gold mine would endanger wildlife, risk watershed contamination, and threaten the Stikine River, one of Canada’s greatest salmon rivers. The mine, proposed by Imperial Metals, would destroy part of three streams, including rainbow trout spawning areas. It would also convert pristine Black Lake into a “tailings impoundment area”.

Under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and its regulations, metal mines processing more than 3,000 tonnes of ore per day must undergo comprehensive assessments with public participation. Yet the government gave the Red Chris Mine only a screening level assessment, despite the fact it would produce ten times as much ore. The government also chose to assess only a small fraction of the project, leaving out the actual mine and mill.

“It’s outrageous that the federal government would attempt to evaluate a mine project while ignoring the mine itself,” said Jamie Kneen of MiningWatch. “Canadians have shown they want to see environmental decisions taken as seriously as economic concerns. We’re determined to ensure the federal government does just that.”

Also of concern is the proposed mine’s waste dump, which is forecasted to stand 50 metres taller than the Peace Tower, and cover 271 hectares, an area the size of 455 football fields. The massive pile would threaten water contamination through acid rock drainage.

“We hope to safeguard Canadians’ ability to protect the environment through a comprehensive assessment process that involves public participation and applies the precautionary principle,” said Canadian Environmental Law Association lawyer Richard Lindgren, who represents six environmental groups participating in the appeal as interveners.

**For more information, please visit [www.ecojustice.ca](http://www.ecojustice.ca) or contact :**

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