



CoalWatch Comox Valley
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 12, 2010

COALWATCH CALLS FOR CEAA TO POST ALL PUBLIC COMMENTS ABOUT RAVEN COAL MINE

Lawyers acting for CoalWatch Comox Valley have requested that the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) post on its website all comments it receives from the public relating to the Raven Underground Coal Project. And they say the public comment period should be extended for 30 days once CEAA starts posting the comments.

The letter, prepared by the Environmental Law Centre at the University of Victoria, and the law firm Devlin Gailus, was sent to Jim Prentice, Canada's Minister of the Environment, and to CEAA.

"The public comment process is a virtual town hall meeting – but imagine a town hall meeting where you weren't allowed to see who else was there or hear anything they were saying," says John Snyder, President of CoalWatch. "That's how CEAA has been treating citizens with these public comments."

"It is disrespectful to the public. And doesn't show a lot of respect for the process, either," says Snyder."

The CoalWatch letter says that comments should be on CEAA's website registry because citizens have a right to view public comments first-hand. Otherwise citizens are deprived of vital information that could enrich their views and submissions -- and government loses the advantage of people learning from each other and thus presenting better information to government.

"It leaves the concerned citizen isolated and uninformed, making submissions into an opaque Black Box of Government that is hidden from view," states the letter.

"This is one more reason that we are calling for Minister to authorize a joint federal/provincial review panel for the Raven coal mine," says Snyder. "Comments must be posted on the registry in a panel review."

The current deadline for public comments is September 20. Information about how to comment, a "citizens registry" of comments received by CoalWatch, and the CoalWatch submission to CEAA are all on the group's website, www.coalwatch.ca.