**Backgrounder**

**Government of BC and Mining Industry Actions to Improve the Management and Operation of Mine Tailings Storage Facilities (TSFs) in BC**

Following the Mount Polley TSF breach, the Government of BC and the BC mining industry took action to reduce the potential for future TSF failures. After four years of regulatory and policy change, the [Audit of Code Requirements for Tailings Storage Facilities](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/mineral-exploration-mining/mine-audits-unit/audits) confirmed that revisions made to the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in British Columbia in 2016 have had a positive effect on the management and operations of TSFs in BC. The audit finds BC’s regulatory framework governing TSFs aligns with established industry best practices and is among the best in the world. Government, with the support of industry, has made additional improvements to modernize and strengthen BC’s mining regulations, which are some of the highest mining standards globally for environmental protection, health and safety, reclamation and closure. Below is a chronology of regulatory, policy and other developments for background:

**2014**

* August – Mount Polley TSF failure occurs
* August – MABC executive forms expert tailings sub-committee to provide technical support to Imperial Metals and Government of BC
* August – MABC coordinates industry-wide dialogue on dam safety with Mining Association of Canada (MAC), other provincial mining and engineering associations, and the Canadian Dam Association (CDA)
* August – Government of BC, Williams Lake Indian Band and Soda Creek Indian Band develop Terms of Reference for Independent Expert Panel
* September – Independent Expert Engineering Investigation Review Panel appointed
* October – MAC Tailings Working Group formed to study Independent Expert Panel recommendations

**2015**

* January – Expert panel report issued; calls for changes to BC Mining Code and adherence to MAC Tailings Guidance
* February – Independent evaluation of MAC Tailings Guidance launched
* February – Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (EGBC) commits to Panel Recommendation to create a site characterization guideline to improve dam safety
* April – CDA forms Working Group on Mount Polley dam failure
* June – Government of BC commits to Mining Code review including tailings management issues
* July – Recommendations issued for enhancements to MAC Tailings Guidance materials
* August – MAC Tailings Working Group begins update of tailings guidance materials
* October – CDA Report makes recommendations on Mount Polley
* November – Chief Inspector of Mines presents findings and makes 19 recommendations.

**2016**

* July – Government of BC releases TSF updates to Mining Code and responds to Independent Expert Panel recommendations
* July – Government of BC revises the Mining Code’s TSF provisions to mandate new measures for mines with TSFs including, Engineers of Record, Independent Tailings Review Boards, TSF Qualified Professionals, and Dam Safety Inspections
* July – Ministry commissions third party to compare legislation and guidelines in BC, Montana and Alaska and finds BC’s requirements for mining to be equal to or more stringent than those of the two states
* September – EGBC launch “Site Characterization Guidelines for Dam Foundations in BC” following multi-stakeholder input and expert review

**2017**

* February – Third Edition of MAC’s Tailings Guidance is released
* February – Government of BC establishes administrative monetary penalty program to provide an efficient tool to obtain compliance and deter non-compliance
* February – Government of BC launches BC Mine Information website to increase transparency of mining regulatory oversight
* December – Government of BC formalizes Mines Investigation Unit to undertake complex investigations

**2018**

* September – UBC Senate approves the world’s first Graduate Certificate Program in Mine Tailings Management

**2019**

* February – BC Budget invests $20 million to enhance regulatory effectiveness through new Mines Health, Safety and Enforcement Division
* March – Government of BC issues first administrative monetary penalty under *Mines Act*
* June – Government of BC appoints new Standing Code Review Committee with Indigenous, labour and industry representatives, to ensure mining continues to be one of the safest heavy industries in British Columbia and regulations remain current and respond to the rapid pace of change in the industry
* August – Professor Bruno Oberle, Chair of the Global Tailings Review, commends the state of tailings governance and practice in BC
* November – BC hosts International Tailings and Mine Waste Conference where lessons learned from Mount Polley are reviewed

**2020**

* August – First Global Tailings Standard is released
* August – *Mines Act* amendments strengthen and modernize compliance and enforcement by separating the Compliance and Enforcement Division from the Permitting Division; creates new Chief Permitting Officer position, distinct from the Chief Inspector of Mines
* September – Government of BC’s First Chief Auditor is appointed

**2021**

* April – Revisions to Health, Safety Reclamation Code unanimously recommended by a committee comprised of Indigenous, labour and industry representatives