



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## PRGT pipeline to nowhere deserves new environmental assessment

*Indigenous leaders and locals in Northern BC seek involvement in a decision that would shape their future*

**GITXSAN LAX'YIP (Hazelton, BC) December 6, 2024** - This week, the Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition sent a letter to Tamara Davidson, the new BC Minister of Environment, calling for greater transparency and public participation on the upcoming substantial start determination for the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT) pipeline. The letter was signed by over 90 people and organizations including Gitxsan Huwilp members, First Nation hereditary and elected governments, non-profit organizations, ranchers, homeowners, and businesses in northern BC, as well as university professors and doctors.

If the Minister determines the PRGT pipeline is substantially started, the EA certificate will become permanent and the project will have the greenlight to continue construction. If the Minister decides otherwise, the pipeline will have to undergo a new environmental assessment and obtain a new EA certificate in order to proceed.

The letter calls upon the Minister to:

1. Ensure there is a process for the public to review and provide comment on the proponent's application for a substantial start of the PRGT Pipeline;
2. Confirm that, while the substantial start determination is being made, construction on the PRGT Pipeline will be paused; and
3. Confirm that the Minister herself, not a bureaucrat within the ministry, makes the substantial start determination regarding the PRGT Pipeline.

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**Quotes:**

*Taylor Wale, fisheries biologist and Gitxsan House member of Wilps xGwoimtxw:*

"The PRGT project was originally granted an EA Certificate in 2014. But they didn't begin construction until August 2024—nearly a decade later. Despite the government's overhaul of the environmental assessment process in 2018 to address significant gaps in the old system, PRGT's permitting and construction are still guided by the outdated 2014 standards. If this government declares the project "substantially started," it does so under rules it has already deemed insufficient."

*Jesse Stoepler, co-executive director of the Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition:*



Of the 900 km long pipeline route, the proponents have only partially cleared 42 km of the right of way. This is a tiny fraction of the work necessary to build the pipeline, but not surprising given it was left to the last minute. If the Minister allows this project to proceed under its current certificate, it would be one of - if not the - smallest amounts of work ever deemed sufficient for a substantive start. This wouldn't just lower the bar for an industry that has a terrible track record of destruction in our watershed, it would remove the bar completely.”

*Shannon McPhail, co-executive director of the Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition:*

“So much has changed since the PRGT pipeline was approved in 2014. Our province has dealt with record setting wildfires, droughts, landslides, flooding, and other issues created by fossil fuel-driven climate change. The project still needs major changes to its route and there is no approved LNG terminal for the pipeline to go to - it's currently a pipeline to nowhere. This project needs a new environmental assessment to determine whether it is still in the interests of local Indigenous communities and all British Columbians.”

#### **Attachments:**

[Letter to BC Minister of Environment, Tamara Davidson](#)

#### **Background:**

PRGT is a 900 km pipeline project that would carry fracked gas across northern BC. The pipeline received an environmental assessment certificate (“EA Certificate”) in 2014 and was originally intended to deliver gas to an LNG terminal on Lelu Island, near Prince Rupert. However, it now plans to supply the proposed Ksi Lisims LNG terminal north of Prince Rupert, though it does not yet have provincial approval to do so.

Construction on the pipeline only started in August 2024, just three months before the environmental assessment (EA) certificate expiry date of November 25, 2024. The Minister must now decide whether enough construction work has occurred as of this date for the pipeline to be considered “substantially started”.

The letter sent this week raises concerns that much has changed since the PRGT pipeline was assessed and approved 10 years ago, such as the increased impacts of climate change on Northern BC, significant public opposition to the pipeline (including from several local Indigenous nations, leaders, organizations and youth), and the significant route amendments that the pipeline needs to be viable. The letter states that information from the public—particularly those along the pipeline route—about the minimal construction completed so far and the conditions and perspectives that have changed in the last 10 years is relevant to the Minister's determination.

#### **About:**

**Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition (SWCC)** was founded in 2004 by a diverse group of people living and working in the Skeena River watershed. Our board of directors and membership reflects the broad interests of the people in this region. We are united in



understanding that short term industrial development plans, even 50-year plans, will not benefit our region in the long run if they undermine the social and environmental fabric that holds the watershed and its communities together. SWCC has twice earned the recognition of top ten most innovative and effective organizations in Canada as well as the North American Conservation Leadership Award. The PRGT pipeline would travel through the Skeena Watershed.

**For more information, photos or a media contact, please contact:**

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