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***TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMENTS  
on the Environmental Impact Statement***

***Fortune Minerals Limited.  
Saskatchewan Metals Processing Plant***

***Near Langham, Saskatchewan***

Prepared by  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment  
Environmental Assessment Branch  
September, 2013

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## Preface

This document is provided by the Environmental Assessment Branch (EAB) of Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment (the ministry) as supporting information for the public review of Fortune Minerals Limited's (Fortune, the proponent) environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed Saskatchewan Metals Processing Plant (the Project). The Project is located in the Rural Municipality (RM) of Corman Park No. 344, approximately 30 km northwest of Saskatoon and 2 km east of Langham, Saskatchewan. Fortune is proposing the development of an ore concentrate refinery which will be in operation for approximately 20 years.

This document has four major parts:

The first part provides an overview of the provincial environmental assessment and review process. It outlines the events and activities that led to the EIS being released for public review and describes how the public can provide comments to the ministry on the proposed Project.

The second part provides a brief summary of the Project. This summary is intended to provide information to assist the reader in deciding whether they are interested in finding out more about the Project. It is not intended to be a full representation of the Project. Interested readers should visit a review centre or the Environmental Assessment Branch website to read the EIS for the Project (locations and web address are listed Section 4).

The third part of the document provides the ministry's evaluation of Fortune's conclusions regarding the predicted impacts of the proposed Project, the effectiveness of any identified mitigation measures and any follow-up requirements that would be placed on Fortune by the Minister, should the Project be approved.

The fourth part presents the conclusions reached by the ministry and invites the public to comment. The Minister, when making the final decision regarding the environmental acceptability of the proposed Project considers information provided in the EIS, the public's comments and Technical Review Comments (TRC).

## 1. Environmental Assessment and Review Process

### Introduction

The Environmental Assessment Act (the Act) in Saskatchewan requires the proponent of a "development" to conduct an environmental impact assessment (EIA). The EIA provides the information needed by the Minister responsible for the Act (Minister of Environment) to determine whether, from an

environmental perspective, a proposed development should be allowed to proceed and, if so, under what conditions. As part of the EIA process, Fortune is required to prepare an EIS that documents Fortune’s assessment and conclusions on the potential environmental effects of the proposed Project. The EIS also describes the measures Fortune plans to take to reduce negative environmental impacts and enhance the benefits of the Project. Once completed, the EIS undergoes both a technical and public review prior to a decision being made by the Minister regarding the Project.

The EAB review process provides a broad understanding of the potential impacts associated with a project and ways to minimize those impacts.

The purpose of the environmental assessment and review process is to ensure that adequate environmental safeguards are in place before a development is allowed to proceed and that development proceeds in a manner understood and broadly accepted by the public. These safeguards may arise out of the actual design and nature of the proposed development or, should the development receive approval under the Act, as a result of ongoing regulatory involvement by government agencies.

In addition to the Act, this Project may be subject to the following acts, regulations and guidelines:

- The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002
- The Water Regulations, 2002
- The Mineral Industry Environmental Protection Regulations, 1996
- The Clean Air Act and Regulations, 1989
- The Hazardous Substances and Waste Dangerous Goods Regulations, 1989

Other provincial and federal agencies also have legislation and regulations which may be applicable to the Project.

### **Submission of the Environmental Impact Statement**

In August 2010, the EAB received a proposal from Fortune for the Saskatchewan Metals Processing Plant Project. The proposal was sent to provincial agencies for technical review. Following technical review of the proposal, the Project was declared a “development” as defined by Section 2(d) of the Act and Fortune was asked to submit an EIS for the Project. The EAB developed project-specific guidelines (PSG) to assist Fortune in the development of the EIS. The PSG were made available for public comment in January 2011. Comments were received from local residents and integrated where required, before the final PSG were provided to Fortune in March 2011.

## Technical Review

Technical review provides the government perspective on the proposed development.

Following receipt of the EIS in June 2011, it was reviewed by provincial technical experts and regulators to ensure that potential environmental issues had been identified and adequately addressed. During this review, it was determined that additional information was required from Fortune that would add to the quality and accuracy of the EIS and provide additional information to inform subsequent regulatory approvals. The revised EIS, containing responses to requested information was provided to the ministry on September 11, 2013 and, upon further review was considered to contain adequate information to proceed with public review.

This TRC document has been prepared pursuant to Section 11 of the Act, and is meant to assist the public and government decision-makers in their review of the EIS. The comments represent a summary evaluation of Fortune's EIS. An addendum to the EIS which contains Fortune's responses to the requested information was received on September 9, 2013 and is included as a component of the EIS.

## Public Review

The public is invited to comment on the Project EIS beginning on October 5, 2013.

Pursuant to section 11(2) of the Act, both the EIS and TRC have been made available for public inspection. Pursuant to section 12(b), the Minister has extended the review period from thirty (30) days to sixty (60). During the review period, members of the public may make written submissions to the ministry regarding the Project and information provided in the EIS and associated documents. Interested readers should visit a review center or the EAB website to review the EIS and TRC for the Project (locations listed in section 4).

## Ministerial Decision

The Minister considers both the public and technical review comments when making a decision.

Information generated during the public and technical reviews of the EIS will be submitted to the Minister of Environment for consideration. The Minister, under section 15 of the Act, may give Ministerial Approval to proceed with the development, with any terms and conditions that the Minister considers necessary or advisable, or the Minister may refuse to approve the development as proposed and will provide reasons for the decision.

## 2. Summary of Proposed Project

Information in this section is taken from the Project EIS and is neither comprehensive nor inclusive of the information contained in that document. Please refer to the Executive Summary, EIS main document and addendum for more complete information.

The Project, as proposed, would be located in the RM of Corman Park No. 344, approximately 30 km northwest of Saskatoon and 2.5 km east of Langham. The Project would occupy three quarter-sections (SE 23-39-7 W3M and N<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> 14-39-7 W3M) and would process approximately 65, 000 tonnes of ore concentrate per year from Fortune’s proposed NICO mine in the Northwest Territories. The processing residue generated would be stored on site in a series of engineered, double-lined structures referred to as the Process Residue Storage Facility (PRSF). The PRSF has a leachate (water from the process residue) collection system and a leak detection system. Any water that drains from the process residue within the PRSF would be collected by the leachate collection system and returned to the process plant.

The Project consists of the construction, operation and decommissioning of a processing plant which would include:

- The plant infrastructure, including office building, processing plant building, warehousing, etc.;
- Water storage ponds;
- Modular PRSF for processed waste storage;
- Proposed groundwater wells for process water withdrawal and associated pipelines;
- Proposed deep injection well(s) and related infrastructure; and,
- Transportation infrastructure including roads, railway access, etc.

The process water for the facility would be withdrawn from the Dalmeny Aquifer.

## **Alternatives Considered**

The rationale for selection of the Langham site as a preferred option is discussed in Volume 1, Section 4.1 of the EIS. This section discusses Fortune’s consideration of several alternatives related to the final Project location. The Project details used to determine the preferred option included: the site layout; water supply; storage of water and waste residue; the processing technologies to be used; facility infrastructure; and supporting infrastructures including power natural gas, communications, road access and rail access. Six alternative locations for the metal processing plant were considered. One in Alberta - Whitecourt; two in Manitoba - Eli and Brandon; and three in Saskatchewan - Langham, Belle Plaine and North Battleford. Based on cost benefit analysis and consideration of Project requirements, the Town of Langham was chosen as the preferred location. Additional details on the alternatives analysis is provided in section 1.1.1 in the Addendum to EIS document.

## **Public, First Nations and Métis Engagement Feedback and Response**

Section 11 of the EIS provides details on Fortunes engagement with the public. Fortune circulated a pamphlet of “Frequently Asked Questions” to area landowners in August 2010 and held an open house meeting in Langham and Dalmeny in February 2011. Fortune has also met with the Reeve and council of the RM of Corman Park to discuss the Project. Volume II, Appendix S provides a list of questions and concerns raised during the engagement process. All project specific concerns raised during the engagement process were addressed by Fortune during the meetings and have been documented in the relevant sections of the EIS.

Pursuant to Section 10 of the Act, public advertisement was placed in local newspapers in January 2011, advising the public that Fortune was conducting an EIA and requesting comments on the draft PSG for the Project. Comments were received from eleven people by the deadline, as well as several additional submissions in the following months. Most respondents mentioned potential issues with groundwater withdrawal and were concerned that the withdrawal could deplete the aquifer and affect surrounding wells. Where required, these comments were integrated into the PSG to ensure concerns were adequately addressed during conduct of the EIA.

Based on the information provided in the EIS, the EAB has concluded with respect to the Crown’s duty to consult, that there is no obligation as the Project is occurring on privately held land, with no expected off-site impacts which could affect First Nations or Métis communities Treaty or Aboriginal Rights.

### **3. Technical Review Comments**

#### **Introduction**

The intent of the technical review process is to give provincial specialists at a variety of agencies an opportunity to examine the EIS to:

- Develop their opinions about how adequately the environmental issues related to the development have been characterized and addressed; and
- Determine whether the information provided is sufficiently complete and technically accurate enough to support the public review phase of the process.

The technical review of the EIS for the proposed Project identified various issues related to potential environmental impacts and environmental management of the project that required clarification. These issues were

addressed with additional data collection and analysis conducted by the proponent, and the results are presented in the final EIS submission.

Release of the EIS for public review should not be interpreted as absolute agreement with all items within the EIS, but simply that the issues remaining can be handled through ongoing regulatory relationships or terms and conditions that might flow from a decision made pursuant to the Act that would modify the “development” to make it acceptable.

Below is a summary of the significant issues raised during the technical review and Fortune’s response. In general, Fortune has acknowledged and addressed in the revised EIS, addendum, and supplementary reports the issues raised during review of the initial EIS submission. Additional project details will be provided at the time of licensing, should the development receive approval.

### **Biophysical Impacts**

Fortune has evaluated the potential impacts of the Project on the biophysical environment, possible mitigation measures that could be employed to eliminate or mitigate (reduce) the impacts, and any residual effects that might remain after the mitigation measure are implemented.

Specifically, Fortune has examined the potential effects of the development on land use, geology and hydrogeology (groundwater), hydrology, air quality, noise and terrestrial and aquatic resources. The impact assessment and mitigation analysis for each of these components can be found in the relevant sections of the EIS and are summarized in Volume I, Section 6.1.10 and 6.2 of the EIS. In addition, commitments made by Fortune to address impacts on valued ecosystem components can be found in Volume I, Section 15 of the EIS.

### **Surface Water**

The EIS states that no measurable impacts are anticipated on surface waters. Although intermittent streams and wetlands are present within the regional study area, the proposed Project location is a significant distance from any major watercourse. There are no waterbodies or watercourses in the Project area which will be directly impacted. Site water management at the proposed site would ensure any runoff leaving the Project site does not impact any surface water. Details of the Project site water management are discussed in Section 5.3 and 6.1.2 of the EIS.

The proposed Project would occur in an area currently cultivated for agricultural use. Several wetlands would be impacted by construction of the facility but are small, shallow (< 2 m deep) and have no surficial drainage to large water bodies. The proponent has committed to work with the province and other experts to develop a conservation/compensation plan for the wetlands that

would be impacted. For additional discussion on impacts to surface waters, see Volume I, Section 6.1.3 and Volume II, Appendix O of the EIS. Based on technical review of the information provided in the EIS and the Proponents commitments, no significant impacts to surface waters and wetlands are anticipated to result from the Project.

### **Groundwater**

The initial EIS reported that the Project was expected to use 55.8 m<sup>3</sup>/hr of groundwater during normal operation which would be withdrawn from the Dalmeny (Upper Floral) aquifer. This aquifer is the water source for surrounding residences and farms, as well as the Town of Langham. Fortune has since re-evaluated its potential water needs and now indicates the operation would require 35% less water than first predicted (36 m<sup>3</sup>/hr in normal operation, 52 m<sup>3</sup>/hr during start-up).

Fortune considered obtaining treated wastewater from Langham to supplement their processing water requirement, but determined that the additional treatment requirements were not practical. Fortune has also considered the use of other alternative water sources but found the costs to be prohibitive. To minimize water usage, Fortune has refined the facility design to maximize the recycling of process water prior to disposal. This redesign has minimized water needs and also waste water produced as a result of the operations.

The results of the groundwater modeling reported in the EIS (Volume I, Page 83 and Volume III) indicated that use of the Dalmeny Aquifer as a water source for the Project will have minimal impact. Based on current predicted water requirements for the facility, Water Security Agency has indicated that the proposed use of groundwater by Fortune is sustainable and will not have a significant negative impact on the Dalmeny aquifer or existing licenced groundwater users. While the modelling predicts slight drawdown of water levels within the aquifer, those impacts are expected to remain within the footprint of the development. The drawdown is expected to reach equilibrium during operation and return to the original condition after pumping ceases. Monitoring of water withdrawals and observation wells can be used to validate and refine the model on an ongoing basis and will allow for adaptive management through permitting should issues arise.

Fortune also modeled the worst case scenario (January 2013 report) which included increased use from the town of Langham and the original water usage rates reported in the initial EIS. The maximum predicted drawdown was <6 m based on this scenario. Any impact to local users of groundwater from the Dalmeny aquifer due to Fortune's water use in this scenario could be mitigated by lowering the respective pump assemblies in the few wells in closest proximity to the Project. Wells outside of the immediate vicinity of the proposed Project are not predicted to experience a drawdown in the water level

of their wells. Monitoring wells at the Project site could be used to monitor drawdown and assess and mitigate potential impacts to other users before they occur. Under this scenario, the aquifer would recover to within 2.2 m to 2.3 m of its original level, following shutdown of the Project. The recovery is muted by the continuing withdrawal by the town of Langham as shown in the report “Addendum – 3D Flow Modeling Supplement for Water Well Production System - January 2013” included with the EIS. As indicated above however, this scenario is not anticipated to occur based on the revised water requirement estimates for the facility.

### **Process Residue Storage Facility**

The PRSF will be used to permanently store process residues generated from the metal processing plant. The process residue is a mixture of three components: acid leach recovery of cobalt and gold residue; copper re-leach iron and gypsum residue; and iron precipitates from the bismuth recovery process. Process residues would contain elevated levels of several elements including arsenic and would have acid producing potential; although this would be mitigated by adding a basic solution to residues to increase alkalinity and neutralize the acid generating potential. The primary process residue in the PRSF will be scorodite, an iron-arsenate mineral which is generally stable with low toxicity and solubility. The final process residue filter cake would have approximately 31% moisture content prior to disposal in the PRSF.

The PRSF would be comprised of engineered, double lined storage cells with leachate collection and leak detection systems. It is expected that approximately 150,000 tonnes of residue will be produced each year. The results of modeling reported in the EIS (Volume I, section 3.4; Addendum, page 3; Volume II, Appendix A and B; and Volume III, Section 7) indicate that the proposed composite liner reduces migration from the storage cells into the environment, and will protect the Dalmeny aquifer for at least a 500-year period. The leachate collection system will be used to further mitigate leachate migration from the cells.

At the request of EAB and technical reviewers, Fortune completed an additional exercise to model potential contaminant migration from the storage facility to the Dalmeny aquifer (January 2013). In this new scenario, it was assumed that the water level outside the PRSF was higher than the water level within the storage facility. This concern was raised due to high snow pack levels observed in recent years. The model assumed that the leachate collection system was not in operation at any time. The results showed that minor amounts of three metals moved out of the PRSF after 500 years but travelled less than 5 m below the base of the liner. This scenario assumes no active management of the PRSF during operations and closure which would be in contravention of operating license requirements (Addendum – Supplemental 2D Flow and Transport Modeling - January 2013).

Based on this additional modeling, technical reviewers were satisfied that the proposed design of the storage cells and additional leachate collection system would be adequate to contain potential contaminants and protect receptors including the Dalmeny aquifer. In addition, the design of the waste storage facilities would be further refined to enhance environmental protection during the subsequent permitting and licensing phase, should the Project proceed.

### **Wastewater Disposal**

The processed brine wastewater generated by the Project would be disposed of via two wastewater injection wells into the Souris River formation (approximately 860 meters below ground level). The results of modeling presented in the EIS (Volume I, Section 6.1.1.2; Volume II, Appendix C and D and Addendum, page 6 to 10) indicates that the disposal horizon in the Souris River formation is capable of accepting the predicted brine volume of 11 m<sup>3</sup>/hr during the proposed 18 year operation period.

The wastewater injected into the deep well will be recycled water from boilers, the reverse osmosis system and process water. The leachate or any runoff collected in the PRSF is not treated directly but will be pumped back into the process water supply where it will be treated in the reverse osmosis plant. The clean (permeate) water is reused in the process. The concentrated brine stream is further treated to remove heavy metals prior to deep well injection. The brine solution at this stage contains primarily sodium sulfate and would be compatible with the receiving formation. The heavy metal stream is recycled back into the circuit for valuable metal recovery. Any iron (Fe) or arsenic (As) will be removed in the Fe/As precipitation process and stored as scorodite in the PRSF.

The proposed disposal well construction and operation would be regulated by the Ministry of Economy and the surface infrastructure and wastewater quality proposed for deep well disposal would be regulated by the Ministry of Environment - Environmental Protection Branch.

All domestic wastewater will be hauled away by a licensed operator to an approved facility for disposal.

### **Air Quality and Acoustic Environment**

The EIS states that the activities are predicted to have a negligible effect on air quality. Of particular interest are airborne particulates in the immediate vicinity of the facility. A number of measures will be implemented in order to minimize the amount of particulate matter released from the site including: dust suppression on haul roads and the access road from Highway 16; re-vegetation or wetting of soil stockpiles; reducing wind velocities around exposed

stockpiles; and/or, using coarse aggregates or pavement for the construction of roads, if required.. These dust suppression measures will be undertaken to maintain air quality in line with The Clean Air Regulations and Occupational Health and Safety Regulations.

There have been concerns expressed by local residents that the Project will emit sulphur dioxide and particulate matter containing heavy metals. The results of airborne dispersion modeling completed during preparation of the EIS indicate that under start-up conditions, contaminant concentrations for all modeled periods at receptors beyond the property boundary met the Saskatchewan Ambient Air Quality Objective. Under normal operating conditions, modeling results indicated that all ground-level concentrations, for all modeled periods (i.e. 1-hr, 8-hr, 24-hr, and annual) from all emission sources of the Project site also met the relevant air quality objectives. In regards to sulphur dioxide emission, the Project uses wet chemical methods that do not generate sulphur dioxide. The process breaks down sulphide minerals into sulfuric acid which is neutralized in the process. The stack will discharge waste heat, steam and water vapor. For a discussion and description of air emissions from the Project, see Volume I, Section 6.1.5, 6.1.9 and 7.4; Volume II, Appendix I and J; and Addendum Appendix I of the EIS.

A Noise Impact Assessment was completed to assess the noise effects associated with the operation of the Project. The noise assessment included baseline sound monitoring at four locations: east of Langham at Railway intersection (R1), east of the Project site (R2), the southeast corner of the Project site (R3), and south of the Project site (R4). Baseline monitoring was conducted in spring, summer, fall and winter in 2010. The modeling results indicate that noise generated by the Project would slightly exceed baseline conditions at two receptors during operation. Fortune will conduct noise monitoring during operation to validate the results of the model and will allow for adaptive management through permitting should issues arise. For a discussion and description of noise from the Project, see Volume I, Section 5.5; Volume II, Appendix N of the EIS.

### **Terrestrial Environment**

The EIS includes the discussion of potential impacts of the Project on the terrestrial environment including terrain, soil, vegetation and wildlife.

Volume I, Section 5.6 and Volume II, Appendix P, of the EIS includes discussion of the impacts of the Project on soil quality. The proposed Project site is located in an area highly impacted by previous agricultural activity. Soils are predominantly medium textured loam combined with a moderately coarse textured sandy loam. The Proponent would be required to reclaim the site to pre-disturbance conditions at the end of the operations. Due to the relatively small footprint of the Project and the decommissioning and reclamation requirements, significant impacts to soil quality in the area are not expected.

Volume I, Section 5.7 and 5.7.1, and Volume II, Appendix O includes information related to the detailed assessment of vegetation and wildlife in the Project area. Field surveys for rare plants, birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians were completed in spring, summer, and fall of 2010. A total of 115 plant and 20 wildlife species were identified within the Project area. No rare or uncommon plant species or federally or provincially tracked animals were observed in the area. Based on information presented in the EIS and commitments by the Proponent, significant impacts to rare plants or wildlife species are not anticipated to result from the Project.

## **Social, Cultural and Economic Impact**

### **Heritage Resources**

A Heritage Resources Impact Assessment was conducted in the study area and no heritage resources were identified at the proposed Project site. The Heritage Resources Branch subsequently indicated that there were no further concerns with the proposed Project related to heritage resources. Additional assessments will be undertaken prior to development of any utility, pipeline or transportation corridors in the area.

### **Socio-Economic Consideration**

The proposed Project is anticipated to have a number of socio-economic effects. The majority of effects will be positive in terms of jobs, training, and business opportunities. Some of the negative effects considered are loss of agricultural land, noise, increased traffic and visual aesthetics of the facility and storage cells. The proponent intends to support communities in the local study area through a community investment program that will help to offset any additional pressures on community infrastructure and services.

Several local residents and groups have expressed concerns regarding the Project. Concerns to date have included impacts associated with: groundwater use and potential contamination; storage and transportation of hazardous chemicals; waste management and storage; airborne emissions; and the impacts of associated infrastructure including road and rail systems and electrical transmission lines. The RM of Corman Park has established a zoning bylaw and Fortune will therefore require a municipal development permit prior to proceeding with the Project. As a component of this process, additional public engagement will be required after which the RM will consider the level of support by residents of the RM and determine if issuance of a development permit is warranted. This additional consideration of public input by the RM will ensure local concerns including socio-economic issues are fully considered prior to the project proceeding.

## **Decommissioning, Reclamation and Abandonment Plan**

The EIS includes a conceptual decommissioning and reclamation plan for the Project site. For a summary see Volume I, Section 8.0 of the EIS.

A detailed plan for decommissioning, reclamation and abandonment, and appropriate financial assurance will be developed in consultation with the regulatory agencies during licensing if the proposed Project receives Ministerial Approval under the Act. A post-closure monitoring plan will be in place until it can be demonstrated that the facility is performing as expected.

## **4. Conclusion**

The Saskatchewan Environmental Assessment Review Panel (technical reviewers) and the EAB conclude that Fortune has undertaken sufficient studies and provided adequate information about the proposed Saskatchewan Metals Processing Project such that the EIS can be made available for public review.

### **Invitation to Comment**

The public is invited to review Fortune Minerals Ltd.'s Project EIS and the Technical Review Comments and to provide their comments.

The EIS along with these Technical Review Comments are being made available to the public for review at at the Legislative Library in Regina; The RM of Corman Park No. 344; the offices of the Town of Langham and Dalmeny; the Environmental Assessment Branch office in Regina; and on the Ministry of Environment website at:

<http://www.environment.gov.sk.ca/ea2010-064>.

Written comments received during the public review of the EIS along with the Technical Review Comments will be considered by the Minister of Environment when he makes his decision under section 15(1) of the Act to either:

- (a) give ministerial approval to proceed with the development and impose any terms and conditions that he considers necessary or advisable; or
- (b) refuse to approve the development.

## Contact

To ensure your comments are considered, please submit your written comments on the EIS to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment on **Friday, December 6, 2013** to:

Alvin Yuen, P.Eng  
Senior Environmental Assessment Administrator  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment  
3211 Albert Street  
Regina SK S4S 5W6  
[Environmental.assessment@gov.sk.ca](mailto:Environmental.assessment@gov.sk.ca)

Please ensure mailed comments are postmarked no later than **December 6, 2013**.