

## BC mining minister won't seek reelection

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### Michael Penn | Juneau Empire -

Bill Bennett, British Columbia's Minister of Energy and Mines, left, speaks to reporters with Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott during his first day in Alaska at the Walter Soboleff Center on Monday. Bennett is to hear from Alaskan businesses, tribes, municipalities, legislators, and environmental groups, and see first-hand the Taku River from the Tulsequah mine to the salmon fishery process on the Alaskan side of the border and meet with Alaska state officials on transboundary water issues.

By [KEVIN GULLUFSEN](#)

JUNEAU EMPIRE

Alaska's relationship with British Columbia's mining interests was complicated this week by the retirement of BC Energy and Mining Minister William "Bill" Bennett, who announced Tuesday he will not run for reelection in 2017.

The announcement comes six months after Bennett and Alaska Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott brokered a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding prescribing increased communication between Alaska and Canada on the regulation of transboundary mines (mines that feed cross-border rivers). Mallott and Bennett drafted the memorandum to address concerns from Southeast Alaska's business, tribal and environmental groups over Canadian mining regulation.

Bennett gained notoriety in Alaska when a mine tailings pond failed at Mount Polley mine in 2014, releasing 10 million cubic meters of water and 4.5 million cubic meters of potentially toxic slurry into the Caribou River. The spill raised concerns from stakeholders about the safety of other Canadian transboundary mine tailings ponds, including similar proposed facilities on tributaries of the Stikine, Unuk and Alsek rivers.

In August 2015, Bennett visited Southeast Alaska to meet with Mallott and transboundary mine stakeholders as well as tour the Tulsequah Chief Mine, which has been leaching acid mine drainage into the Taku River for 50 years.

Bennett, a high-profile and controversial member of Premier Christy Clark's cabinet, won the East Kootenay riding (the Canadian equivalent of an electoral district) for four consecutive elections as a member of the Liberal party.