

Chamber of Mines confident of Lopez rejection as DENR chief

By [Louise Maureen Simeon](#) (philstar.com) | Updated March 10, 2017 - 4:16pm

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Environment Secretary Gina Lopez during her confirmation hearing as environment secretary, March 9, 2017. Rasec Flores Obmamot/Senate PRIB

MANILA, Philippines — Following two consecutive hearings, the country's mining industry has expressed its confidence that the Commission on Appointments (CA) will reject Gina Lopez as the Environment secretary, emphasizing that she was not able to convince the members of the committee.

In a briefing Friday, the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) said Lopez failed to persuade and justify her side as she faced strong opposition from various groups from the business sector, the mining industry, indigenous peoples and even from some CA members during her two-day confirmation hearing.

"We are 90 percent sure [that she will be rejected]. The chamber is confident that she was not able to convince the committee," COMP Chairman Artemio Disini said.

"I think the legislators who asked questions, many of them we're not convinced. I think we have an even chance," COMP Legal and Policy Vice President Ronald Recidoro added.

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After the eight-hour hearing on Thursday, the CA committee on environment and natural resources led by Sen. Manny Pacquiao decided to set an executive session on Tuesday to discuss Lopez's appointment.

Lopez 'heavily reliant on consultants'

While Lopez's fate remains hanging, the Chamber emphasized that should the CA reject her appointment, President Rodrigo Duterte should not re-appoint her as the environment chief.

"We are calling on the president and the CA to just end this suffering. We are hoping for the decision by Tuesday and her rejection by Wednesday. And we are calling on the president to not re-appoint her," Recidoro said.

"It is imperative that Lopez be rejected and be replaced by someone who understands natural resource management and can bring our resources out of the ground and for the benefit of everybody," he added.

He said that the past two hearings showed what kind of leader Lopez is, emphasizing incompetence and lack of balance.

"We had the glimpse of the kind of leadership she wants to bring into the DENR. She is not competent for the job and she's heavily reliant on consultants. Her imbalance is very obvious as she can disregard the country's natural resources," Recidoro said.

Stakeholders iterated that the industry cannot really work together with Lopez should she be confirmed as DENR Secretary.

"The industry is in peril and will experience no growth. It's a big disservice if we will not be able to utilize our mineral wealth," Recidoro said.

Engineer and geologists group StandFIRM also said that Lopez lacks the scientific and technical knowledge to lead the department.

"There is already a failure of leadership in DENR. With her at the helm, there will be more harm than environmental protection," Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship Secretary General Lysander Castillo added.

The Chamber maintained that Lopez is painting the mining industry as an "environmental rapist" that just take what they want and leave nothing but suffering and destruction.

Referring to the law, the group said Lopez has a duty to enforce the Mining Act and her non-implementation, particularly on the issuance, monitoring and regulation of contracts should be a ground for her non-confirmation.

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