



# Alberta Environment and Parks Systems to Manage and Report on the Oil Sands Monitoring Program Follow-up



Executive Summary

November 2018

## Who

Alberta Environment and Parks

## What

Follow-up Performance Audit

## When

We conducted our field work between July 2017 and April 2018 and substantially completed our audit on May 1, 2018.

## Learn more

[www.aep.alberta.ca](http://www.aep.alberta.ca)

## Why we did this audit

Oil sands development has led to concerns about its environmental impacts and the need to better understand and respond to these impacts. The Alberta and Canadian governments responded by establishing the joint environmental monitoring program for the oil sands. Since then, the governments have been collaborating to enhance environmental monitoring, evaluation of and reporting on the impacts of oil sands development.

The program objective is to monitor air, water, land and biodiversity in the oil sands region, and to evaluate and report on the impacts of oil sands development. The program aims to enhance understanding of the cumulative effects and environmental changes related to oil sands development, and to guide responsible development of the resource.

From 2012 to 2014, the Department of Environment and Parks managed Alberta's responsibilities under the program. The Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency (AEMERA) managed the program from 2014 to 2016. The agency was dissolved in 2016, after which the Environmental Monitoring and Science Division of Environment and Parks assumed responsibility for managing the program.

The quality of the systems to manage the program and report on its results are key to the program's success, accountability, and transparency. A broad spectrum of stakeholders—government, industry, and the general public—is interested in the program's activities and results. In 2014, we audited the program's project-management systems and its first annual report and found that both needed improvement.

# Alberta Environment and Parks

## Systems to Manage and Report on the Oil Sands Monitoring Program Follow-up



The objective of our audit was to determine whether the Department of Environment and Parks has implemented our outstanding 2014 recommendations<sup>1</sup> to:

- provide clear, accurate, and timely reporting on the Oil Sands Monitoring (OSM) program
- implement effective processes for monitoring project status; develop and implement work plans with roles and responsibilities, timelines, and deliverables; and clarify what needs to be done to implement any projects and commitments remaining from the 2012–2015 Canada-Alberta implementation plan for the oil sands

### What we concluded

We conclude that the Department of Environment and Parks has not, as of May 1, 2018, implemented our recommendation to provide clear, accurate, and timely reporting through the annual report on the Oil Sands Monitoring (OSM) program.

We concluded that the department has implemented our recommendation to:

- implement effective processes for monitoring project status
- develop and implement work plans with roles and responsibilities and timelines and deliverables
- clarify what needs to be done to implement any projects and commitments remaining from the 2012–2015 Canada-Alberta implementation plan for the oil sands

### Why this is important to Albertans

The annual report on the environmental monitoring in the oil sands is the key accountability mechanism that informs stakeholders about the program's success. The report must demonstrate how resources were spent, and provide clear, accurate, and timely information on program activities, results and overall success.

<sup>1</sup> In 2014, AEMERA managed the Oil Sands Monitoring (OSM) program on behalf of Alberta. Our 2014 recommendations were therefore addressed to AEMERA. We rephrased our outstanding recommendations to reflect that the Department of Environment and Parks currently manages Alberta's responsibilities under the OSM program.

### What we examined

Our follow-up audit evaluated whether the OSM program 2016–2017 annual report met results-reporting principles that department management had agreed were suitable for this audit.

We also examined the department's project management processes based on a sample of 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 projects.

### What we found

The department did not establish a robust process to develop the 2016–2017 annual report. As a result, the report lacked important information about the overall program and its projects.

### What needs to be done

We recommend that the Department of Environment and Parks, working with Environment and Climate Change Canada, improve processes to ensure the annual report on the OSM program is complete, accurate, clear and timely.

### Consequences of not taking action

Without complete, timely, and accurate public reporting, stakeholders will not know the status and results of environmental monitoring in the oil sands and cannot hold the government accountable for meeting its commitment to ensure environmentally responsible development of the oil sands.

### Read the full report at:

[oag.ab.ca](http://oag.ab.ca)

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