

For Immediate Release

Alberta Government has Head Stuck in Tar Sands

Edmonton - The Government of Alberta fails to acknowledge the critical issues requiring immediate action, says Sierra Club of Canada in the wake of the release of the Oil Sands Consultation Final Report.

“The multi-stakeholder committee tasked with drafting the framework was unable to reach agreement on key issues. Both government and industry representatives consistently supported business as usual, an out of control pace of development and inadequate environmental protection,” said Lindsay Telfer, Prairie Chapter Director for the Sierra Club and member of the Committee. “The Alberta Government needs to pull their heads out of the tar sands and stop putting corporate profit before the best interest of Albertans.”

The framework was intended to create a new vision for oil sands development and identify the steps necessary to achieve this vision. Despite some progress on the issues of reclamation and community infrastructure, the committee was unable to reach any agreement on major areas of concern, specifically:

- Pace of development, the area of concern most often emphasized during the public consultations, divided the Committee and they were unable to reach any agreement and so made NO consensus recommendations on this topic.
- Healthy Environment, another key area of concern for the Albertans, was the most significant area of contention with over half of the non-consensus recommendations in this section.

“Every day, Albertans call for a slow down on the pace of development. This committee may not have agreed on that, but the people are increasingly clear - ignoring them is ignoring the public interest,” said Leila Darwish, Associate Prairie Chapter director for the Sierra Club. “When Albertans are getting sick, their future livelihoods are being destroyed, and quality of life in the province is going down, the government needs to take its head out of the tar sands, recommit to democracy, and do what’s best for this province - a tar sands time out.”

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BACKGROUND

Sierra Club of Canada recommends a conditional moratorium on developments. It is believed that through a time out, the province, country and communities can gain additional information to inform future development decisions. A conditional moratorium on oil sands development would see a pause on future oil sands project's, lease sales and approvals until a series of conditions are met.

Sierra Club of Canada believes that an environmental impacts assessment be completed as it relates to heavy oil, tar sands, gas exploration, infrastructure, extraction and refining. Sierra Club recommends that this study be done immediately and that a moratorium on future approvals be enacted until:

- a) the study is complete;
- b) the study identifies precautionary environmental and social limits that will protect human and ecosystem health; and
- c) the findings are used to inform legislation that will pace development to enable ecosystem and social sustainability.

For more information on the Sierra Club of Canada's tar sands work, visit www.tarsandstimeout.ca