



NEWS RELEASE
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B.C. not effectively overseeing the safety of dams

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General has released a new audit report: [*Oversight of Dam Safety in British Columbia*](#).

In it, the office examines whether the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development has effectively overseen the safety of dams in B.C.

The report covers the ministry's oversight of the safety of 1,900 regulated dams; dams that are being built, such as Site C, were not included in the audit.

Key findings

The audit concluded that the ministry has not effectively overseen the safety of dams.

“The ministry had several significant shortcomings in its oversight of dam safety,” said Michael Pickup, auditor general.

“Notably, we found that the ministry did not adequately verify or enforce dam owners' compliance with key regulatory safety requirements. While owners are ultimately responsible for the safety of their dams, part of the ministry's mandate is to oversee their compliance.”

The audit also found that the ministry had gaps in its records, which resulted in it being unaware of some dams that should have been subject to its oversight.

Recommendations

The report contains nine recommendations related to informing all dam owners of their regulatory requirements, improving processes to verify compliance, improving the monitoring of compliance and enforcement activities, and strengthening performance measures and targets.

The ministry has accepted all recommendations.

Background

The ministry regulates dam safety under the *Water Sustainability Act* and the Dam Safety Regulation, which aims to mitigate loss of life and damage to property and the environment from a dam failure.

It checks that dam owners follow the regulatory requirements and enforces them through the dam safety program and Compliance and Enforcement Branch.



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The auditor general is a non-partisan, independent officer of the legislature who reports directly to the legislative assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the auditor general and staff to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

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