



NEWS RELEASE

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Auditor General says government not managing its contaminated sites adequately

VICTORIA — Major changes are needed in how the province manages its contaminated sites, concludes Auditor General.

The Auditor General today released his report on government's management of its contaminated sites. "Better information about the extent of the problem and the seriousness of the risks is needed if government is to ensure that the public's scarce resources are focused on the highest priority sites." Strelieff said.

Contaminated sites are a legacy of our past, when awareness of environmental and health impacts were less known and the economy operated with fewer regulations. Through its own operations and by inheriting sites the private sector has abandoned or is financially unable to manage, the government has become responsible for managing an extensive inventory of contaminated sites. These sites can pose serious risks to the environment and to human health. They can also create significant economic and financial costs if not managed properly. The Auditor General examined how government was managing these sites and whether it was adequately accounting for its performance.

The Auditor General found that two of the eight organizations examined have their contaminated sites programs running reasonably well. However, much remains to be done.

"I am concerned that legislators do not receive comprehensive information about how well government is fulfilling its stewardship role for contaminated sites. A complete inventory and assessment of sites is needed if the government is to understand the nature and magnitude of the problem, set clear overall priorities, identify the work required to be done and provide legislators with a reliable plan and cost estimate of the remediation needs."

In conducting this examination, several other risk matters came to the Auditor General's attention. The report includes a section dealing with the financial risks associated with mining site restoration and with emerging environmental information about the risks associated with naturally occurring radioactive materials in the oil and gas sector. "Legislators will need to address these matters at some point and I wanted to bring them to their attention," said Strelieff. The report includes several recommendations for improving management of contaminated sites.

Report information

[Download complete report in .PDF format](#) (size 594 KB)

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