
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment

New air monitoring program responds to residents' concerns

DAWSON CREEK — The Province and partners from the oil and gas industry are embarking on a three-year air monitoring and community engagement program in the Northeast, Environment Minister Terry Lake announced today.

Following on the heels of phase one of the oil and gas health assessment, the air monitoring program is in response to growth in the oil and gas industry and concerns from residents over its potential impact on air quality.

Funding for the first year is more than \$550,000 with contributions from government, the BC Oil and Gas Commission and members of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. To date, the following companies will be involved in the program: ARC Resources Ltd., ConocoPhillips Canada, Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Devon Energy Corporation, Encana, Imperial Oil Limited, Penn West, Progress Energy, Shell Canada, Spectra Energy, Suncor Energy and Talisman Energy Inc.

During the first year of the program, actions will focus on:

- Starting monitoring immediately at two priority rural locations in the South Peace. This will draw from the experience of Alberta's Sentinel Monitoring and the work of Alberta's Peace AirShed Zone Association (PAZA).
- Funding a co-ordinator to establish a locally based air-monitoring working group to review air quality data currently collected in the Northeast and determine the scope, plan and design of the broader network requirements.
- Making air quality data easily accessible to the public to help citizens make daily decisions about air quality and their health requirements.

Initial monitoring will focus on hydrogen sulphide (H₂S), sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) traditionally associated with oil and gas development. In larger communities, where a wide variety of emission sources are seen, there will be a more broad-based monitoring suite of criteria for air contaminants such as PM_{2.5} (particulate matter), Ozone, oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and SO₂.

Beyond the initial year, the geographic scope and characteristics of the monitoring network will be determined by the emissions inventory and the local air monitoring working group.

Quotes:

Environment Minister Terry Lake —

“Our government agrees that it’s important that the public receive open and transparent access to information that could affect their health. This new program is a great example of how government and industry can work together to ensure public health and the environment are protected.”

David Pryce, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers vice-president of operations —

“Canadians expect the oil and gas industry to do its part. Canada’s oil and gas industry endorses proactive measures and community-based initiatives to address public concerns and ensure safe and responsible resource development. As a partner in the air monitoring and community engagement program, natural gas producers are working hard to improve their environmental performance.”

Energy and Mines Minister Rich Coleman —

“We’ve been working with northern communities and industry to establish an air monitoring program. This was an important commitment made in our Natural Gas Strategy that would engage people who live near oil and gas operations who may have some concerns about how this industry may affect them, and we’re happy to see this moving forward.”

Pat Pimm, MLA Peace River North —

“We are northern British Columbians prospering from the responsible development of our resources. It is our job to assess this progress from all angles and thus play a role in air quality monitoring. I’m happy this project is moving forward because everyone deserves quality air and health in the Peace Country, and that is exactly what this project will assure us.”

Blair Lekstrom, MLA Peace River South —

“This project is a result of our government listening to local residents’ concerns on oil and gas activities and their potential impact on air quality. We are considering the environment and also being transparent and accountable to the public. We are building our air-monitoring platform based on the experience of Alberta’s Sentinel Monitoring system, which was requested by local area residents. This is just another responsible way in which the Province is keeping up with its resource development.”

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