There are no contaminants from tar sands production in Athabasca waters.

“My scientists are telling me that the amount of compounds that can be detected in the Athabasca River at this point in time are not a concern and are of insignificant levels. The fact remains that there are naturally occurring substances in the water. And if we had never set foot in the region those kinds of results would still be there.”

– Rob Renner

Source: http://www.edmontonjournal.com/business/Premier+mute+button+hours/3472439/story.html

The tar sands industry causes toxic contamination of the Athabasca watershed.

“Contrary to claims made by industry and government in the popular press, the oil sands industry substantially increases loadings of toxic PPE [priority pollutants] to the Athabasca River and its tributaries via air and water pathways. This increase confirms the serious defects of RAMP [Regional Aquatic Monitoring Program] (11–13), which has not detected such patterns in the Athabasca River watershed. Detailed long-term monitoring is essential to distinguish the sources of these contaminants and control their potential impacts on environmental and human health (13).”

– Ed Stelmach

Government Fiction VS. Tar Sands Facts

Government is going to force an end to the tailings ponds within a few years.

“…[W]e’re going to have to force — when I say force, we’re going to get more aggressive — and work with companies presently in open pit mining to move to either dry tailings or develop that resource without wet tailings ponds. It’s going to take an investment, there’s no doubt about it. But we just can’t talk about it. We want to show progress. That’s what people see.”

- Ed Stelmach,

Source: Calgary Herald: http://www.calgaryherald.com/business/Stelmach+invites+Avatar+director+oilsands/2939983/story.html#ixzz0yOcaheA4

“Existing tailings directives are not being adhered to

Nine tar sands operations have submitted tailings plans to the province. Of those, just two meet deadlines set out in directive 074.

Source: pubs.pembina.org/reports/tailings-plan-review-report.pdf

New tailings ponds still being approved

Total is also applying to build another tailing pond that will result in the production of 12.5 billion litres of toxic tailings waste each year, which over the project’s life will amount to a volume large enough to fill over 100 sports stadiums.

Source: http://www.ceaag.gc.ca/050/05/documents-eng.cfm?evaluation=37519&type=9

ERCB has approved the Fort Hills and Syncrude tailings pond plans.


ERCB has also approved a tailings plan for Imperial Kearl Project.


Also see: http://www.oilsandswatch.org/blog/81


“There are currently more than 170 square kilometres of tailings ponds in Alberta.”

Government Fiction VS. Tar Sands Facts

**We are reducing greenhouse gas emissions**

“I am proud of our work to address challenges head on. For example, Alberta is the only jurisdiction in North America with mandatory greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for all large emitters. In fact since 1990, greenhouse gas emissions per barrel in the oil sands have been reduced by 39 per cent. We have committed $2 billion to carbon capture and storage.”

– Ed Stelmach

(Source: http://www.alberta.ca/acn/201008/29028B4FD8D3F-B041-0484-081A44A0F5BBAC3E.html)

“The oil sands are the fastest growing sector for domestic GHG emissions and so there are real opportunities for reductions.”


**Tar sands are the fastest growing source of GHGs in Canada.**

Environment Canada has projected that tar sands operations could account for about 44 per cent of the increase in Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions from 2006 to 2020. In Environment Canada’s “reference case” projection, oil sands emissions would rise from 4 per cent of the national emissions in 2006 to 12 per cent in 2020.


**Tar sands emissions are offloaded to the U.S.**

“Increasingly, bitumen from the oil sands is being shipped to the United States where a much greater upgrading and refining capacity exists for heavier grades of oil (NEB 2006). This is supported by Statistics Canada data, which shows the ratio of bitumen to synthetic crude oil production in Canada rising by 93 per cent between 2002 and 2008 (CAPP 2009a). As a result of this growing quantity of bitumen in the production mix, it appears that emissions associated with the upgrading and refining of bitumen were increasingly avoided in Canada, which also contributed to reductions in overall oil production intensity.”


We stand virtually alone in North America with respect to the regulation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from large industrial facilities. Only in Alberta will you find mandatory GHG reporting requirements, legislation requiring mandatory GHG reductions, and a price on carbon emissions.”

– Ed Stelmach


“Technological developments continue to reduce the carbon-intensity of the oil sands, while “conventional” crudes are getting more carbon intensive.”

– Ed Stelmach

Government Fiction VS. Tar Sands Facts

The Athabasca River is well managed.

“Furthermore, the Athabasca River has one of the most protective water management frameworks that exist on any river in the northern hemisphere.”

Ed Stelmach, quoted in:
http://www.alberta.ca/acn/201008/29028B4FD8D3F-B041-0484-081A44A0F5BBAC3E.html

“The Athabasca River, which is the main source of freshwater for oil sands operators, is one of the most protected waterways in North America. Strict limits are placed on industry’s water use.”

–Ed Stelmach, Speech

Source: Remarks at the Energy Security Forum

The monitoring and management of the Athabasca River have serious defects.

“Our study confirms the serious defects of the RAMP. More than 10 years of inconsistent sampling design, inadequate statistical power, and monitoring-insensitive responses have missed major sources of PAC [polycyclic aromatic compounds] to the Athabasca watershed. Most importantly, RAMP claims that PAC concentrations are within baseline conditions and of natural origin have fostered the perception that high-intensity mining and processing have no serious environmental impacts. The existing RAMP must be redesigned with more scientific and technical oversight to better detect and track PAC discharges and effects.”

Source: Kelly, Erin N, Jeffrey W Short, David W Schindler, Peter V Hodson, Alvin K Kwan, and Barbra L Fortin.

“Oil sands development contributes polycyclic aromatic compounds to the Athabasca River and its tributaries.”


 “…the reviewers raised significant concerns about the Program itself. They felt there was a serious problem related to scientific leadership, that individual components of the plan seemed to be designed, operated and analyzed independent of other components, that there was no overall regional plan, that clear questions were not being addressed in the monitoring and that there were significant shortfalls with respect to statistical design of the individual components.”

– Executive Summary

All disturbed land is being reclaimed.

“Industry is also required by law to reclaim all disturbed lands to a productive state.”

– Ed Stelmach

Source: http://www.alberta.ca/acn/201008/29028B4FD8D3F-B041-0484-081A44A0F5BBAC3E.html

Of the 602 square kms of land disturbed by oil sands mining operations, only 1.04 square kms (104 hectares) is certified by the government as reclaimed.


In Alberta, reclamation is defined simply as the “stabilization, contouring, maintenance, conditioning or reconstruction of the surface of land,”


Reclamation is a very different goal to restoration, which is an intentional activity that initiates or accelerates the recovery of an ecosystem with respect to its health, integrity and sustainability.

Source: Society for Ecological Restoration International, The SER International Primer on Ecological Restoration. SER has identified nine attributes as a basis for determining when restoration has been accomplished. www.ser.org/pdf/primer3.pdf

Of the 602 square kms of land disturbed by tar sands mining, only 1.04 square kms is certified by the government as reclaimed.
Government Fiction VS. Tar Sands Facts

We’re greening the tar sands with In situ.

“…environmental improvements we’re working on, such as clean coal technology, in-situ oil recovery, and carbon capture and storage…”


In situ has higher greenhouse gas emissions than mining.

“…in situ operations generate two and half times as much greenhouse gas per barrel of bitumen as oil sands mines (91 kg/barrel vs. 36 kg/barrel, excluding the emissions associated with bitumen upgrading).”


Other reports showing that in situ has higher emissions than mining include: Charpentier, Alex D, Joule A Bergerson, and Heather L Maclean. “Understanding the Canadian oil sands industry’s greenhouse gas emissions” 4 (2009).

Source: http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/4/1/014005


We’re greening the tar sands with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS).

“I am proud of our work to address challenges head on. For example, Alberta is the only jurisdiction in North America with mandatory greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for all large emitters. In fact since 1990, greenhouse gas emissions per barrel in the oil sands have been reduced by 39 per cent. We have committed $2 billion to carbon capture and storage.”

– Ed Stelmach

Source: http://www.alberta.ca/acn/201008/29028B4FD8D3F-B041-0484-081A44A0F5BBAC3E.html

There is no CCS operating in the tar sands, and even the much touted $2 billion program is undersubscribed.

“CCS is unlikely to make a significant contribution to reducing the GHG intensity of oil sands products sufficiently to meet emerging international low carbon fuel standards, at least until 2050.”


“One thing I’m especially excited about is the progress Alberta is making in regard to carbon capture and storage from large industrial emitters. In fact, Alberta is well on the way to becoming the first jurisdiction in North America with an extensive carbon capture and storage network.”


Source: http://premier.alberta.ca/speeches/speeches-2008-Jan-16-AB_Enterprise.cfm

“Other roles for CO₂ capture exist in oil and gas, but the case for oil sands comes with both opportunities and challenges. The oil sands are the fastest growing sector for domestic GHG emissions and so there are real opportunities for reductions. However, oil sands operations are very diverse (both geographically and technically) and only a small portion of the CO₂ streams are currently amenable for CCS due to both the size of emissions streams and the concentrations. The problem is that lower concentration or smaller emission streams are more costly to capture because of the additional unit capital and operating costs (including energy use) associated with the capture, separation, and purification processes.”

We’ve never done anything wrong…… And we’ll never do it again.

“The bottom line is: in Alberta, we do not proceed with development at the expense of the environment….

“Alberta is also pioneering a new environmental management approach that goes beyond individual projects to look at the cumulative effects of all proposed developments within a given area.”

-Ed Stelmach, speech on January 16, 2008

Source: http://premier.alberta.ca/speeches/speeches-2008-Jan-16-AB_Enterprise.cfm

Not even Alberta’s Environment Ministry puts the environment first

“These objectives are intended to provide protection of the environment and human health to an extent technically and economically feasible, as well as socially and politically acceptable.”


In Alberta, “Balance” means approving 100 per cent of tar sands projects