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## **Coalition calls on panel to reject Shell Jackpine oilsands mine expansion**

CALGARY — With public hearings into a proposed oilsands mine expansion set to begin today, a coalition of environmental groups is calling on the joint federal-provincial review panel to reject the project.

Shell's proposal to expand its Jackpine oilsands mine would increase production at the existing facility by 100,000 barrels per day. The company's environmental assessment shows that expanding the Jackpine oilsands mine along with other planned developments will harm fish and wildlife, damage wetlands and old growth forests, exceed legally binding air quality limits and cause acid rain. It will leave a legacy of toxic waste buried in lakes, damage two significant rivers, and produce greenhouse gas pollution that will put Canada's and Alberta's climate targets further out of reach.

The Oil Sands Environmental Coalition — comprised of the Pembina Institute, the Alberta Wilderness Association and the Fort McMurray Environmental Association, and represented by Ecojustice — has outlined its concerns about the Jackpine mine expansion in a detailed submission to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

"Shell Jackpine's environmental assessment shows the highest level of environmental impacts ever reviewed by an oilsands panel," said Carolyn Campbell of the Alberta Wilderness Association. "Albertans and Canadians would be shocked to learn that regional habitats for sensitive species like caribou, owls and forest birds are projected to decline by 30 to 60 per cent, based on proposed development over millions of hectares in northern Alberta."

The joint review panel process aims to assess the environmental, economic and social impacts of the proposed project to determine whether the expansion is in the public interest and should proceed. Regulators have already approved plans to triple oilsands production from current levels to more than 5 million barrels per day, despite the serious environmental problems that have accompanied oilsands expansion to date.

"When we consider Shell's proposal in the context of all the other industrial activity currently taking place or planned for the oilsands region, it's clear we're at a crossroads," said Simon Dyer, policy director at the Pembina Institute. "The environmental impact assessment for this project offers the clearest indication we've ever seen that the cumulative impacts of planned oilsands development are just too high to be considered responsible."

Changes that could make oilsands development more responsible include establishing and implementing a low-flow limit on water withdrawals to protect the Athabasca River, implementing a comprehensive wetland protection policy, requiring proof of successful long-term reclamation of liquid tailings and introducing federal regulations to limit greenhouse gas pollution from the sector.

"The current speed of oilsands development is damaging the social fabric of Fort McMurray and exceeding our ability to cope," said Ann Dort-Mclean of the Fort McMurray Environmental Association. "There is no need for another oilsands project, especially when the downsides are so high."

The Shell Jackpine Mine Expansion hearings begin in Fort McMurray on October 29. The Oilsands Environmental Coalition will appear before the panel along with expert witnesses Dr. David Schindler of the University of Alberta and Dr. Glenn Miller, a tailings expert from the University of Nevada.

### **Background**

- For an overview of the environmental concerns related to the Jackpine proposal, see the Pembina Institute media backgrounder, “The case against the proposed Shell Jackpine oilsands mine expansion.” (<http://www.pembina.org/pub/2378>)
- The Oil Sands Environmental Coalition’s detailed submission to the joint review panel is available online via the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency registry. (<http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/050/documents-eng.cfm?evaluation=59540>)
- Read the Ecojustice blog post, “Oilsands — more crude production, more problems.” (<http://www.ecojustice.ca/blog/oilsands-more-crude-production-more-problems>)

### **For more information:**

[Simon Dyer](#), Policy Director, Pembina Institute (587) 873-3937

[Carolyn Campbell](#), Conservation Specialist, Alberta Wilderness Association (403) 921-9519

[Melissa C. Gorrie](#), Staff Lawyer, Ecojustice (780) 405-8597