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New Public Consultation Process for MOSS

Under public pressure, the government has caved in on its action plan for the Mineable Oil Sands Strategy (MOSS, see *WLA* Dec. 2005). They have replaced the online public consultation and workshops with a five-member advisory committee composed of different sectors, including well-known environmentalist Martha Kostuch. They will work with the Cumulative Environmental Management Association (CEMA) and other stakeholders to review and recommend how consultation on policy principles for the oil sands area should proceed, and they will produce a report by the end of March. Note that this is about the consultation process and not the principles of the strategy itself.

Alberta environment minister Guy Boutilier commented that stakeholders were expecting the government "to move forward in a more open and collaborative manner" and that Albertans wanted the oil sands developed so that the environment was protected and sustained. SRD minister David Coumts says the government wants Albertans to be confident that development is sustainable. No doubt oil sands mining will be sustainable until the oil runs out; what that means for the environment is another question.

