

Financial Assurance of Reclamation in the Alberta Oil Sands

Management of mine and tailings reclamation activities by surface mining oil sands operations in Alberta, Canada is experiencing increased national and international attention. Of particular concern is the ability of mines to execute and fund reclamation activities. Concern stems from a lack of demonstrated tailings reclamation technologies, perceptions of a poor reclamation track-record, and a lack of transparency with respect to the potential cost of reclamation activities relative to the monies secured in Alberta's Mine Financial Security Program (MFSP).

Limited information is publicly available regarding oil sand reclamation costs, activities and technologies. Available data typically comes from disparate sources.

This presentation examines the expected costs of oil sand reclamation activities through a study of corporate Asset Retirement Obligation (ARO) liabilities, the Province of Alberta's former Environmental Protection Security Fund, and published data relating to reclamation costs. Issues relating to current liability funding via the MFSP are introduced.

Biography

Ursula Thorley is a registered Professional Engineer in the Province of Ontario. She has industrial and academic experience in the surface mining of oil sands, base metals and gold. She joined the Robert M. Buchan Department of Mining in 2007 as a Ph.D. candidate and teaching fellow. Her Ph.D. research into mine design and planning systems in the oil sands has been supported by NSERC and Queen's University. Prior to joining Queen's Ursula was Senior Engineer (Mining) responsible for the planning of Syncrude's Mildred Lake Tailings facilities. She is a past winner of both the CIM Student Essay Contest for her M.Sc. thesis (Graduate Mining 2003) and the CIM Student Poster Contest (Graduate 2011) for the work presented today.