

# Government-wide: Contaminated Sites

## Overall Conclusions

- The Province does not have a coordinated approach to assess and manage risks for the contaminated sites it is responsible for.
- The Province has a process to ensure it identifies the contaminated sites it is responsible for; however, there are weaknesses in monitoring.
- The Department of Environment did not implement all recommendations from the June 2010 Management of Contaminated Sites audit.

## Why We Did This Audit

- Contaminated sites can have a significant impact on human health and the environment.
- We identified a significant deficiency during our financial audit in 2019.
- The Province recorded a \$372.1 million liability for contaminated sites and was responsible for tracking 127 sites as of March 31, 2019.

## Government's Contaminated Sites

- No department or entity is responsible to develop a provincial approach to ensure appropriate action is taken on known and potentially contaminated sites the Province is responsible for
  - A coordinated approach is needed
- A process exists to identify potentially contaminated sites, however ongoing monitoring is lacking
  - Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has no formal process to periodically monitor provincial highway bases for potential contamination
  - Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has issues with records of historic work completed on highway bases. Up-to-date recordkeeping would allow management to better assess risks to human health and the environment
- No government-wide process to prioritize work on contaminated sites. As government has limited resources, prioritization would allow for a documented and consistent approach for management to effectively allocate resources to benefit human health and the environment
- Department of Lands and Forestry has only recently begun site evaluations on historic mine sites. Site evaluations are a requirement of the Contaminated Sites Regulations established in 2013

## Follow-up on 2010 Recommendations

- 4 of 16 recommendations from the 2010 Management of Contaminated Sites audit remain not complete
- Examples of not complete recommendations include:
  - Quality assurance process not in place
  - Information not consistently reflected in the electronic tracking system



## Recommendations at a Glance

### **Recommendation 1.1**

The Executive Council Office should assign responsibility to an oversight body to implement a consistent, coordinated approach for assessing and managing known and potentially contaminated sites the Province is responsible for.

### **Recommendation 1.2**

The Province of Nova Scotia should have a complete inventory of known and potentially contaminated sites the Province is responsible for, including a process to monitor relevant information for decision making.

### **Recommendation 1.3**

The Province of Nova Scotia should implement a risk-based approach to assess and prioritize all known and potentially contaminated sites the Province is responsible for.

### **Recommendation 1.4**

The Department of Environment should ensure that management provides appropriate oversight of the inspectors.