

Indian Oil and Gas Canada's Environmental Regulatory and Policy Changes

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Indian Oil and Gas Canada (IOGC) is the federal regulatory agency responsible for the management and administration of oil and gas resources located on designated Indian Reserve land across Canada, pursuant to the *Indian Act*, and *Indian Oil and Gas Act* (IOGA) and *Regulations*, 1995. IOGC issues surface leases, right-of-way permits and exploration licences for oil and gas activity which triggers the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA). As part of the Government's plan for Responsible Resource Development, which seeks to modernize the regulatory system for project reviews, CEAA (S.C. 1992, c. 37) was repealed when the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA 2012) came into force on July 6, 2012. CEAA 2012 focuses federal environmental assessment efforts on major projects that have a greater potential to cause adverse environmental effects. Since the majority of projects proposed on reserve lands are less complex or lower risk in nature, they are therefore "non-designated" and not subject to the formal federal environmental assessment under CEAA 2012. However, this does not mean that these non-designated projects can proceed without any environmental review. CEAA 2012 requires that before a federal department can authorize a project on federal lands, including reserve lands, it must determine that the project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects. IOGC has prepared an Environmental Review Form that will give more certainty to First Nations and Industry while still allowing IOGC to fulfill their duty to ensure projects will not cause significant adverse environmental effects.

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