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The 2017–20 strategic plan includes our strategic priorities, outcomes, performance measures, and targets against which the AER and others will monitor our progress and measure our success.

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Managing the cumulative effects of energy development is a complex long-term challenge. We are adapting our regulatory approach and coordinating our work with other ministries and agencies to manage risk and make sure the environment and public safety are protected now and into the future.

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The AER Strategic Plan 2017–20:
Protecting What Matters

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The 2017–20 strategic plan balances long-term objectives while adjusting to shifting circumstances. It reflects our mandate and helps drive us to our vision by being protective, effective, efficient, and credible.

### Protective
The first priority of our strategic plan is to be protective; we will protect the public and the environment. Any industrial activity brings some risk; strong and effective rules at every stage of oil sands, oil, gas, and coal development can reduce these risks. Our work will focus on meeting clear targets that result in sustainable water use, improve environmental performance, manage cumulative effects, and address climate change.

- **Sustainable water use** – We’ll focus on water use in hydraulic fracturing, enhanced oil recovery, and all oil sands development to ensure that companies are using water responsibly, recycling where possible, and applying technology to use less water. With accurate reporting we will have better information to assure responsible and sustainable water use.
- **Reduce fluid tailings** – In 2015, the Government of Alberta released the Tailings Management Framework to manage fluid tailings volumes from oil sands mining. We in turn issued a new tailings management directive and will review companies’ plans to ensure that they are meeting our requirements to reduce tailings volumes so that the tailings ponds can be fully reclaimed at the end of a mine’s life.
- **Climate change** – The Government of Alberta is taking action to address climate change. As part of this plan, the AER will ensure that industry reduces methane emissions from oil and gas operations by 45 per cent by 2025 and that oil sands operators cap greenhouse gas emissions at 100 megatonnes. We’ll start by engaging our many stakeholders and establishing monitoring and tracking systems to better measure progress and report on the results.
- **Cumulative effects management (CEM)** – The AER will develop a regulatory approach within the Government of Alberta’s Integrated Resource Management System (IRMS) to track and manage cumulative effects on the environment and will see decisions made based on risk. This includes developing metrics to report on how the oil and gas industry is performing. These metrics will help the AER assess industry’s performance around CEM, including against thresholds established by government in regional and subregional land-use plans.

### Effective
To be effective, we must regulate development in a way that reduces risk and ensures that Albertans reap the economic rewards of our energy resources. The AER will continue to apply our risk-based approach, where higher-risk activities receive the greatest attention. This includes focusing on the following:

- **Aging infrastructure** – Decades of energy development have created economic value for Albertans but have also left behind inactive infrastructure on the land, which includes wells, facilities, pipelines, and mines that have been suspended or are no longer producing. The AER is working to minimize the financial liability to Albertans and protect the environment and public safety by ensuring the industry maintains its inventory of inactive infrastructure in a safe state until the facilities are dismantled and the land is remediated and reclaimed appropriately. In this way we are ensuring that industry is properly addressing infrastructure risk throughout the entire life cycle of energy development.
- **Pipeline safety** – All pipeline incidents are preventable, but we won’t get there overnight. The AER has helped to reduce the number of incidents through better industry education on pipeline integrity and improved inspection programs even as the overall pipeline length has increased. Keeping with our risk-based approach, the AER will continue to focus on pipeline releases that have the highest consequence to public safety, wildlife, and the environment with a goal to reduce the number of high-consequence incidents in 2017 by 2 per cent from the previous two-year average.

### Efficient
An efficient regulatory system with requirements that ensures public safety and environmental protection can help create a competitive climate that attracts new investment. The AER’s efforts to be more efficient are not just about saving money but also reducing duplication and finding better ways to ensure that our requirements are met. We’re focusing on the following:

- **Regulatory efficiency and stakeholder savings** – The AER has eliminated requirements that are outdated, duplicated, or not suited to emerging industry trends. This has allowed us to improve our processes and provide safer, more efficient services to our stakeholders, which in turn has led to over $700 million in cumulative annual savings to AER stakeholders.

### Credible
Albertans have told us they want an energy regulator that protects the public and the environment and that enforces the rules. Reporting on the results of our work and improving how we involve our stakeholders will help us earn and keep public confidence. We will work on the following:

- **Effective engagement** – We will continue to enhance the ways in which we engage indigenous peoples, stakeholders, and all Albertans by building relationships and ensuring that our regulatory process is accessible, transparent, and accountable. We will ensure we’re on track by measuring Albertans’ awareness of and confidence in the AER.
- **Pursuing regulatory excellence** – After working with Albertans and stakeholders on a model for regulatory excellence that’s appropriate for our province, the AER is ready to take further action to make certain we are a regulator that has utmost integrity, stellar competence, and empathetic engagement. Through our Enterprise Learning Branch, we will make sure that AER employees have the skills they need to do their jobs well, and we’ll continue to build a workplace that engages and motivates employees to excel.

### Integrated Resource Management System
- As the single regulator for oil, oil sands, natural gas, and coal development, we play a key role in the Government of Alberta’s Integrated Resource Management System (IRMS). While the government sets policy direction, the AER ensures that this direction is followed through our regulatory work. This year, we will collaborate with our IRMS partners to support key priorities like managing risks and addressing cumulative effects.

While our strategic plan helps us focus on our key priorities, we know that circumstances can change rapidly. The AER will continue to refine and amend our plan to respond to new challenges and opportunities while making sure we deliver on longer-term targets and commitments.

As the 2017–20 strategic plan was developed, the AER refined its vision to move away from best in class to instead focus on the pursuit of regulatory excellence. This allows us to focus on our own journey towards excellence rather than compete to be “best in class.” With a compelling vision and a clear mandate, a mission statement was developed to truly speak to the mission that AER employees embody each and every day and demonstrates our commitment to protecting what matters.

### MANDATE
To ensure the safe, efficient, orderly and environmentally responsible development of hydrocarbon resources over their entire life cycle. This includes allocating and conserving water resources, managing public lands and protecting the environment while providing economic benefits for all Albertans.

### MISSION
To regulate Alberta’s energy resources by protecting what matters most to Albertans—public safety, the environment, and economic value.

### VISION
The Alberta Energy Regulator is recognized for regulatory excellence, ensuring the safe, environmentally responsible development of energy resources for the benefit of all Albertans. The Alberta Energy Regulator, protecting what matters.