

## Transport Canada told of rail risks in 2006

Mike De Souza, Postmedia News Edmonton Journal

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Transport Canada was warned in an internal audit seven years ago that Quebec, the Prairies and the North - the sites of some recent high-profile railway accidents - had the highest rates of non-compliance with federal rules surrounding the transportation of dangerous goods.

The audit, released to Postmedia News through access to information legislation, reveals the department agreed in 2006 to fix flaws uncovered in its inspection process, poor management oversight and accountability gaps. The report also set deadlines, at that time, to address most of the problems within a year or two.

The audit, which also flagged "incomplete" and "inconsistent" reports from inspections related to dangerous goods, estimated non-compliance rates from inspections in the Quebec region at 54 and 59 per cent from 2003 to 2005. It also found that the prairies and northern region had the next highest rate of non-compliance at 43 and 44 per cent over the same two years.

"There is limited assurance that scarce resources are allocated to value added activities most likely to increase compliance," said the audit, dated Sept. 18, 2006.

"While some regions have developed basic objectives ... there is little attention paid to the ultimate purpose of the regulatory oversight program which is to increase compliance."

But the department and its latest minister, Lisa Raitt, continue to make the same pledges to improve oversight today, in the wake of the fatal Lac-Mégantic railway disaster that killed dozens of people last summer, destroying buildings and spilling millions of litres of oil into the air, water and land. Several high-profile accidents in Alberta and Saskatchewan have also prompted additional questions about safety and oversight.

After being told the 2006 audit was released, Raitt's office declined an interview request Friday.

Transport Canada said in a statement that it "remained committed" to enhancing public safety during the transportation of dangerous goods. The department also suggested that it had "completed and implemented all its proposed actions" in response to the 2006 audit - a claim that was called into question by a 2011 audit on the same topic released by the federal environment commissioner.

The transportation of oil has become a high priority issue for the federal government, which is being lobbied by Alberta's oilsands sector to promote new pipelines and other delivery options to support massive expansion in petroleum production anticipated in the coming years.

Other federal records, released by Natural Resources Canada through access to information legislation, have estimated a 66 per cent increase in the transport of oil by rail between 2011 and 2012.

Keith Stewart, a climate and energy campaigner from Greenpeace Canada who obtained those records, said it was about time the government started paying attention to its own safety experts.

### FEDS SEARCH IRVING OIL

Transport Canada has obtained a warrant to search the offices of Irving Oil in Saint John, N.B., in connection with the deadly train derailment in Lac-Mégantic, Que., last summer.

The agency said it is carrying out the investigation to determine whether rules and regulations set out in the Railway Safety Act and the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act were followed.

In an email, Irving spokeswoman Samantha Robinson said the company was co-operating fully with government investigators.

Oil that was on the train that derailed last July was destined for Irving's refinery in Saint John.

The blast claimed the lives of 47 people.