



Friday, May 08, 2015

Welcome to the Synergy Connector: Message from Gary Redmond, Executive Director

Since its formation in 2006, Synergy Alberta has seen tremendous growth in Alberta and interest from across Canada and abroad. How can communities effectively engage with industry and regulators? Well, one way is through synergy groups that are in 25 Alberta communities today. We are working to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the groups as well as initiate new ones, particularly in areas that are anticipated to see significant industry activity.

I'm delighted to welcome readers to our latest communications link, the Synergy Connector. Synergy is about building and enhancing relationships and with this newsletter, we'll be able to share more information with you. Each edition will include a feature article, sharing of resources, news and a spotlight on one of our synergy groups.

As you likely know, Synergy Alberta operates on a small budget with financial support from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) and the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER), so please help us by sharing this newsletter with your neighbours, colleagues and anyone you think might enjoy reading about the synergy movement. We also welcome submissions, so if you have an idea in mind, let us know and we'll work with you to find an edition to fit it into.



A Decade of Synergy with CMAG

The Central Mountainview Advisory Group (CMAG) celebrated its 10th anniversary on April 16, 2015, during its annual Information Night. More than 70 group members and residents attended the event, which included a panel on water use, open house, and community barbecue.

CMAG formed in April 2005, when coal bed methane activity arrived in the Olds area. A group of landowners looking for more information met and decided to form a synergy group to work with industry and regulators regarding all forms of energy activity in the area. Today the group is comprised of about 20 to 25 community members, industry representatives and local government and regulators.

CMAG's primary focus has been to facilitate the development of oil and gas in the area in a way that respects the community and industry. As such, in late 2014 the group elected to change its name from 'Central Mountainview Action Group' to 'Central Mountainview Advisory Group'.

"We would like to get more community members involved in the group," says Wayne Notley, CMAG Chair. "To that end, we are in the process of creating a community-led bursary program for local students. We're inviting interested community members to join us at our meeting June 2nd to help discuss and shape the program, which he hopes to launch in 2016."

Over the years, members have created a series of Best Management Practices to guide energy industry activity in the area, as well as information documents to share with the public. These documents are available on the [CMAG webpage](#).

The next CMAG meeting will be held June 2nd, 8:30am at the Smitty's in Olds - all community members are welcome! For more information contact [Facilitator Paula Hall](#).

Supporting Synergy: The Alberta Energy Regulator

Synergy Alberta is a not-for-profit organization and is made possible through the ongoing generosity of our supporters.

As one of the original proponents of the synergy movement in Alberta, the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) believes that Synergy Alberta is an important network that shares information in order to better understand the views and concerns of Albertans regarding government and regulatory initiatives.

"Synergy Alberta is a resource that enables broader community engagement opportunities and is one of the few stakeholder networks where the social impacts of energy development are a key consideration," says Jennifer Lutz, Director, Regional Engagement. "We have seen it assist with dispute resolution, which can potentially reduce hearings, and act as a mechanism to create greater energy literacy."

Jennifer explains that the AER, then the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, was supportive of the creation of Synergy Alberta, to provide a centralized resource network that all stakeholders could access. "It was important that synergy groups have information, resources, and a forum to discuss challenges, solutions, successes, and failures."

Today, AER representatives are involved in local synergy groups around the province, and continue to support and contribute to meetings, discussions, and community events. "I've witnessed synergy in action and it can make such a positive difference to stakeholders. It is a way to gain social acceptance because the community has been engaged and collaboration has occurred."

Jennifer adds that Synergy Alberta has been recognized by industry, the Government of Alberta, and the Alberta Energy Regulator and received the Gold Medal for Innovative Management from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada. Synergy Alberta continues to draw attention nationally and internationally and is consistently referenced when AER meets with delegations about best-in-class stakeholder participation.

About the Alberta Energy Regulator...

The Alberta Energy Regulator ensures 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.

"Shortly after the AER was established in June 2013, we created the Stakeholder and Government Relations Division to reach out to our various stakeholders and build stronger relationships," says Jennifer.

The AER provides a variety of opportunities for Albertans to learn more about how the energy regulator meets expectations and is also creating new opportunities for active participation among its stakeholders.

Don't Miss the Synergy Workshop - RSVP by May 13!

Synergy Alberta invites three members of your synergy group to attend the 2015 Spring Workshop. The Workshop will be held in Red Deer at the Hampton Inn and Suites on **Wednesday, May 20, 10:00am-3:00pm.**

This one day seminar will look at what energy is (and isn't) and why it's so tightly tied into our lives. We'll discuss what our choices are, and aren't and what that will mean for us and our children. We'll also be talking about energy education at synergy groups. How can Synergy Alberta help ensure each synergy group has access to quality, respected speakers and information?

Back by popular demand, Dr. Jason Donev has been one of the highest rated speakers at synergy conferences in the past few years. Jason is tenured at the University of Calgary, and has received awards for teaching and outreach. Jason teaches nuclear power, the senior project class for energy and a course that introduces issues related to energy to a non-technical audience, affectionately called 'energy for everyone'. Jason has never worked for the energy industry sector directly but regularly talks with advocates and interested parties all over the political spectrum about various energy issues, especially - but not limited to - nuclear power and climate change.

Morning coffee and lunch will be provided.

- Synergy Alberta will pay mileage for one Synergy Group member to attend (we strongly encourage group members to car pool)
- For those members who travel more than 250 km, Synergy Alberta will pay one night's accommodation (reimbursed)
- Finances should not be a barrier for anyone to attend the Workshop. If this is the case for you, or your group, please contact the Synergy Alberta office and we will do what we can to accommodate you.

Please [RSVP via email](#) by **May 13, 2015.**

Note: We will have a waiting list for those groups who have more than 3 members who wish to attend (these will not be eligible for Synergy funding), once we reach our deadline date, all seats will be open to all synergy groups.

What's Going on Around Alberta?

Does your Synergy Group produce a newsletter? Would you like to share it with the other Synergy Groups around Alberta to let them know what your group is doing?

You can. Send us a pdf copy or hyperlink (to synergyalberta@synergyalberta.ca) and we will send it out to the groups on your behalf.
