

Mike Doyle is the President of the CAGC – the Canadian Association of Geophysical Contractors - representing the business interests of the seismic industry within Canada. The CAGC website may be found at [www.cagc.ca](http://www.cagc.ca).

For operations here in Alberta our members face an uphill climb as far as dealing with an ever expanding Aboriginal Consultation mandate. We wrote the following letter to the then Ministers of (former) Aboriginal Affairs, SRD and Energy. The issue hits us at a time when everyone is concentrating on OilSands versus Environment AND the Natural Gas Industry is in a period of slowdown. Coupled with this we have now moved into a early March election thus bringing to a halt any political will there was on this file.

**Guy Boutilier** / Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations  
**Ted Morton** / Minister of Sustainable Resource Development  
**Mel Knight** / Minister of Energy  
**Ed Stelmach** / Premier

*December 2007*

*Re: Aboriginal Consultation in Alberta*

*The Canadian Association of Geophysical Contractors (CAGC) represents the business of seismic in the Canadian Oil and Gas Industry. We represent some 275 member companies and 15,000 employees. We work closely with the other Oil and Gas Trade Associations including CAPP, SEPAC, CAODC, PSAC and CEPA.*

*I write this letter to express our membership's collective concern with the current lack of political will on the Aboriginal Consultation file in Alberta. We find ourselves pointing to this one issue as the most significant challenge to our business now and into the near future here in Alberta.*

*BC started its consultation some 10 years ago and arguably we find ourselves in the similar historical sequence of events that were experienced there. Government representatives at the field level are handcuffed to make any decisions. Companies are being held economically hostage and lengthening timelines dictate something akin to extortion in order to get projects approved. As happened in BC, this continues to spiral in cost and effect given the duality of a lack of structure from the Government's side and a growing efficiency on the Aboriginal side to work the system to their advantage. These are the stark realities out there right now.*

*The political will on this file has dissipated under the new mandate. The Government has good people in place but has not provided them with the political will necessary to seek the difficult solutions to the growing issue. We, as an Industry, would ask of you, as a Government, to put the emphasis back onto this file.*

*Mike Doyle / CAGC President*

We have continued to meet with the Government bureaucrats on this issue every six weeks or so through the winter to at the very least provide a forum for communication between members and the government. Over time companies previously unaffected now find themselves in a situation they do not understand or feel comfortable with. Medium

sized companies are now in a position where they must consider hiring someone to do their Aboriginal Affairs for them. Small companies are forced to do it themselves as well as run their own business.

The following is some correspondence by a member company regarding their challenges out there on the ground this winter.

*I thought I would bring to your attention and vent our frustrations the difficulties we are having as a company in obtaining approvals. With the short seismic season we have in Northern Alberta, and dealing with the important timing constraints such as Ungulate and Caribou areas, we now are dealing with approval delays well over 4 to 6 weeks due to various "First Nations" groups demanding work commitments through the consultation process. In order to obtain "First Nations" approval we are now required by the "First Nations" agents to agree to hire monitors, elders, slashers, mulchers and medics at non competitive rates and then wait until they decide, in their own time frame, to inform SRD that they have no issues with the program and in their view the consultation process is complete. For our part, we do send SRD a "Chronology of Events" including dates of how and when we have tried to contact these various "First Nations" groups, and with whom, if any, we were able to consult with. To date all consultation with "First Nations" groups done by our company has involved work demands with not even a mention of the true spirit of the consultation process. We are now having programs cancelled because of these delays and demands. To add to our frustrations the work force we are getting from these "First Nations" groups are not band members or even native and are often from other parts of the country.*

*It is my opinion that none of this has anything to do with Native Issues, Heritage sites, burial grounds, spiritual hills etc. Not one "First Nation" group has brought to our attention any areas of concern or suggested we avoid an area because it has historical value to them. Rather, they are using it as a bargaining chip for money versus approval.*

*This is a government issue, not an industry issue. The onus is on the Alberta Government to fix the problem.*

Some members have reported being directed to supply paperwork to "representatives" in cities in other Provinces such as Toronto. One might assume these are legal council but it is a difficult circle to close for sure. If we look to events in BC over the last decade things are going to get worse before they get better.

*Oil has become the opiate of the modern human race. Symptoms of addiction persist. **Mike's Musings***