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Energy Literacy in Alberta – in a recent poll (Feb 2009) Angus Reid surveyed Albertans, Alberta Educators, and Energy Leaders on the perception of energy literacy in this Province. The following column focuses on some of the results. As the world focuses post-Kyoto and the outcome of Copenhagen remaining uncertain (at the time I write this article), the understanding of energy will likely continue to dominate the mindset of the human race. Unfortunately all energy choices have trade-offs. Certainly specific to Canada and in particular Alberta, as resource based economies, abrupt changes will have economic effects that will affect us now and for generations to come.

We have largely lived an energy-unconscious life. The general population does not have a good handle on how dependent they are on production and consumption. We largely live a “behind the switch syndrome”; as long as it turns on who cares how? Oil and gas awareness is largely focused by the media – vis-à-vis the general population – in two areas: pricing at the pump and on environmental concerns. The trouble is that even internally to the Oil and Gas Industry the energy knowledge isn’t that great. Please find a short quiz below (this was only a small part of the survey they conducted). Try testing your own energy literacy. Answers may be found off our website at www.cagc.ca – under Energy Literacy as part of the Front Page Top News stories.

Energy Literacy - 5 Questions on Alberta // 2 on Canada

1) What percentage of Alberta's electricity comes from the following 9 sources: (Or try sorting them from most to least)

Wind Water (Hydro) Wood Natural Gas Crude Oil Oil Sands
Solar Geothermal Coal

2) What percentage of electricity is used by each of these 3 sectors in Alberta:

Industrial Residential / Farm Commercial

3) What percentage of Alberta's Oil Sands can be extracted by each of these 2:

Mining Steam (SAGD)

4) What is Alberta's ranking in Provinces in terms of Wind Generation?

5) What percentage of Alberta's Gov't Revenue comes from energy revenues (royalties)?

6) Canada's Energy Production - What percentage does each of these 5 sources provide in terms of the entire Canadian mix: (Or sort them most to least)

Nuclear Hydro Crude Oil Natural Gas Coal
All other renewals (Wind, Solar, BioMass, etc.)

7) Canada's Electricity Mix - What percentage does each of these 3 sources provide in terms of the entire Canadian Mix (Or sort them most to least)

Nuclear Hydro Thermal (Coal, Natural Gas, etc.)

You may be surprised – Energy Literacy – in whatever form – is harder to be informed than what it may seem.

Out of the study some of the key considerations from the Industry experts – as it related to energy literacy of the general public were as follows: There are environmental trade-offs for all forms of energy; personal consumption and responsible industry use should be first. There are positive results and outcomes of conventional natural gas and oil that people are not aware of; data on air quality outcomes, reclamation results, improvements in how the industry has operated over the past 50 years and plans to continue improving. Environmental targets will be a reality. There is a timeline to **conversion** from one form of energy to another; the public needs a more realistic picture of what that looks like. We need to stop looking at sources of energy competing; we need all forms and should consider which form of energy is appropriate for which use. No one group has the trust of the public regarding environmental impacts; NGO's, Government, Industry, and Science/Education need to collaborate.

Who is the public listening to now? The answer varies depending upon the demographic; youth are listening to different sources than those over 45, and 30-44 year olds are **not** listening to anyone. The age groups listening primarily follow the media but only snippets and mostly negative news. NGO's are **listened** to a little (through media coverage) whereas governments and industry are not listened to at all and even trust in scientific experts has waned of late.

The audiences therefore need to be segmented. Realistic expectations need to be considered for the various groups; some will be more engaged and interested in learning than others. The communications strategy needs to relate energy issues to the issues that people care about. The source of the message and the medium used (i.e. print, social media, etc.) needs to fit the target group. We will absolutely get it wrong if we try to reach the psyche of 7 generations with a blanket approach.

Energize Alberta, a print publication, will be launched in early 2010 to attempt to begin to bridge some of these issues within Alberta. It will be positioned to the rural areas of Alberta however will be distributed in urban centres as well and will follow with online offerings to target information to other audiences. Its Vision is as follows:

- *To engage all Albertans in critical discussions and debates related to opportunities and challenges central to Alberta's sustainable energy future.*
- *To break down barriers that create "energy solitudes" among key stakeholder groups by innovating new forms and dimensions of "energy literacy".*
- *To advocate for new standards of "energy literacy" that help Albertans communicate and compete with confidence in a global energy economy.*
- *To contribute to new literacy standards within the "sweet spot" of energy, environment and the economy.*
- *To help energy players develop within their companies and organizations new energy literacy horizons.*

Look for it – and give it some thought. We have a long way to go; as Albertans, as Canadians, and as Global citizens.

From the Thursday Files

I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape - the loneliness of it, the dead feeling of winter. Something waits beneath it, the whole story doesn't show.

- Andrew Wyeth