

OIL SANDS:

FROM

DEBATE

TO

DIALOGUE



National Round Table  
on the Environment  
and the Economy

Table ronde nationale  
sur l'environnement  
et l'économie



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National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and Public Policy Forum, 2010

From Debate to Dialogue: A New Approach for Canada's Oil Sands

Report prepared by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and the Public Policy Forum.

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*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent those of the participants, the individual members of the NRTEE and PPF, or the organizations with which they are affiliated. The NRTEE and the PPF strive for consensus but do not demand unanimity. Our deliberations included vigorous discussions and debate reflecting diversity of opinion.*

Canada

Canada's oil sands are at a critical point in their development. Economic opportunity and environmental necessity are combining to generate real concern that "business as usual" is not a viable path forward. How do we move forward then on sustainable development of the oil sands?

In the late summer of 2010, we brought together a small group of thoughtful Canadians in Fernie, B.C. from industry, civil society, governments, and the environmental community to consider this question and talk about the prospects for a new approach to oil sands development. One based on dialogue not debate; one that brings interests together to consider viable, sustainable paths forward. Is this needed? Is this possible? How would it work?

The conclusions were clear and meaningful. Such a dialogue is needed and it is needed now. Indeed, there are risks in not proceeding. The dialogue needs to be comprehensive but also focused so it can lead to tangible results. In fact, three dialogue areas were identified: (1) regional oil sands performance, (2) Canada's clean energy strategy, and (3) Canada's climate change policy. All implicate the sustainable development of the oil sands, directly and indirectly.

Based on what we heard during and after Fernie, we recommend that oil sands performance be designated the priority dialogue. Dialogue processes that allow for more productive exchanges of views and ideas are also needed on the other areas because they are important and inter-related to overall progress on this issue.

We believe our collective discussion has opened a new window of opportunity for a positive, Canadian dialogue on the sustainable development of the oil sands. We need to seize this opportunity.

We wish to thank all participants for their time, insights, and willingness to participate in this event and their demonstrated commitment to finding constructive solutions.

Sincerely,

**David McLaughlin**  
President and CEO  
The National Round Table on the  
Environment and the Economy

**David Mitchell**  
President and CEO  
Public Policy Forum



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## Executive Summary

Canadians need a serious national dialogue now on how to sustainably develop and manage future growth in Canada's oil sands. What is currently taking place is a *debate*, rather than a *dialogue*, with strongly opposing positions firmly entrenched on all sides.

There are risks to not having such a dialogue and continuing on the current path. Recognizing that the current debate is not likely to lead to constructive outcomes, many have suggested that a different approach is necessary – one that engages representative interests directly in developing agreed upon solutions.

A ground-breaking meeting was held in the late summer in Fernie, British Columbia, organized by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) and the Public Policy Forum (PPF), where a small group of thoughtful Canadian leaders from all sides of the oil sands debate met to exchange views and perspectives on creating the conditions for a positive dialogue on the sustainable development of the industry. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the current debate and determine if there is both a need and a willingness to initiate a different, more collaborative dialogue on the future of the oil sands, and how this could best occur. Essentially, it was a meeting to consider whether a more positive form of dialogue is necessary and possible at this time.

By establishing a neutral and safe discussion environment, participants were able to improve their understanding of each others' perspectives, start building trust, and talk about the potential for a conversation that could result in constructive actions. The group concluded that a serious and transparent dialogue on the sustainable development of the oil sands is needed, and that now is the time to begin.

The group further concluded that, rather than a single conversation, there is actually a pressing need for three specific dialogues on different but linked aspects of oil sands development - one specific to the regional issue of oil sands environmental performance, a second on the issue of Canada's clean energy future and the oil sands' place in it, and a third on the issue of climate change policy and the oil sands' contribution to this. Together,

*Now, too often, views have hardened into positions, interests have become barricades, and rhetoric has replaced dialogue. However it happened, the goals of sustainable development have become more difficult to achieve – for all of us.*

-- *Progress Through Process: Achieving Sustainable Development Together.*  
National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and Public Policy Forum, 2010.

these should form the basis of a comprehensive dialogue process allowing for a more strategic approach to addressing the sustainable development of the oil sands.

Ideally, all dialogues would occur concurrently. Realistically, however, the three dialogues will need to occur in overlapping stages. Significant political will is required in order to get movement on the clean energy future and the climate change files. Furthermore, it will take more time and effort to obtain the necessary commitment for a serious structured dialogue on these two topics with all the requisite players. Ultimately, progress on all three will be necessary.

However there is a real, viable interest and commitment to starting a focused dialogue *now* on the issue of oil sands environmental performance. There are a number of participants and organizations willing and able to enter into this discussion today, and a number of ongoing initiatives particularly on the provincial level that could benefit from outcomes of such a dialogue. There is a specific opportunity now for advancing the discussions from the Fernie meeting, and building the necessary trust that could lead to a dialogue resulting in actions on the ground. For these reasons, the NRTEE and PPF conclude that the leadership within the industry, governments, environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) and aboriginal communities should seriously consider our recommendation to proceed immediately in advancing a dialogue on the issue of oil sands performance.





01

## Overview and Background Issues

### OVERVIEW

From August 30 to September 1, 2010, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) and the Public Policy Forum (PPF), convened a meeting of leaders from the oil sands, petroleum, and mining industries, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs), government, and civil society to discuss how a constructive dialogue on the sustainable development of the oil sands might be initiated.



Over the course of two days, the group discussed the need for such a dialogue, the core issues that should be included, the barriers and challenges that will need to be overcome to allow a dialogue to flourish, and some initial ideas on how to get such a process underway. Participants were encouraged to 'leave their hats at the door' and come to the meeting with an open mind about listening to others' perspectives and considering collaborative approaches.

Over the past few years the relationships among key parties involved in the oil sands have grown more strained. There is little, if any, actual dialogue among the parties; rather, there is more often debate in adversarial processes such as regulatory hearings, court challenges, and most recently in public relations campaigns. With no collaborative forum to talk with each other, the ENGOs and industry are now each engaged in public relations activities through mass media – print, internet, television and billboards – to promote their respective images and positions. And not only within Canada. They are also taking their message to Washington, D.C., across the United States and into parts of Europe, trying to influence everyone from civil society to decision-makers at the highest levels of government.

The debate is complex and multi-faceted. It is likely one of the most complicated sustainable development issues in Canada today. The polarization of the debate is exacerbated by all sides having their own experts, with their own perspectives, using different data and science, asking different questions, and therefore coming to different and often opposing conclusions. For its part, the general public sees value in most perspectives, but wants a solution that embraces environmental and economic considerations together.

Continuing with this public relations debate may sway public opinion, but it will not lead to constructive solutions that will actually help resolve any of the critical

*“There will be global pressures that dictate the environmental standards of our natural resource exports, if we do not move to define these standards ourselves.”*

issues on the ground, let alone allow for sustainable development of the resource. Only through dialogue can differences be understood, resolved and solutions identified. In the end, there is a choice: debate or dialogue. Debate results in winners and losers – dialogue can lead to lasting solutions.\*

But is there a real appetite for such a dialogue? Are the parties involved ready for it? What could a dialogue accomplish, and what might the process look like? These questions were the focus of the meeting, with a challenge to participants to look beyond today’s debate and envision what might be another approach to starting a constructive dialogue on the sustainable development of the oil sands.

## BACKGROUND ISSUES

The future development of the oil sands is an issue of major economic and environmental importance. It is one of our country’s most pressing sustainable development challenges, inclusive of issues of economic importance, environmental integrity, and social and health issues, particularly for the aboriginal people of the Athabasca region of Alberta. It is a local/regional issue, a national issue, and, more recently, has become an international issue. It is central to Canada’s growing international status as a secure energy supplier, and a creator of jobs and economic wealth across the country.

### ***The local and regional context***

The environmental effects of oil sands production touch all facets of the natural environment – land, water and air. Open-pit mining, in particular, involves the disturbance of significant tracts of land, uses large quantities



*“Part of this dialogue is to look at the leadership that is needed.”*

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\* *Progress Through Process: Achieving Sustainable Development Together*. National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and Public Policy Forum. 2010.

of water and significant amounts of energy, resulting in impacts on the surrounding boreal forest, wetlands, river systems and regional airsheds.

The development of the oil sands has created a dichotomy for the aboriginal peoples of the Athabasca region. On one hand, the developments have resulted in significant employment opportunities and training. On the other, the development has come at a cost to their traditional way of life, affecting fishing, trapping and native food harvesting in the region. Serious allegations of negative health effects have also been voiced by aboriginal communities and continue to be debated.

Whether it be the issue of economic growth, environmental integrity or social and health concerns, it is fair to say that the pace of development in the region is the biggest challenge facing the industry and governments. While the individual operations contribute to the effects on the region, it is the cumulative impact of all that must be considered on a regional scale in order to better manage this resource.

### ***Global energy needs and Canada's clean energy role***

Canada is currently the largest supplier of crude oil to the United States, providing 19 per cent of the country's total crude imports in 2008.<sup>†</sup> In 2010, the oil sands alone provided 1.4 million barrels of crude oil to the United States each day. The oil sands are expected to expand to meet the growing global demand for fossil fuels including markets anticipated in China and Japan. In this respect, current and projected oil sands development is simply meeting market demand.

But as the world moves towards a low-carbon economy in response to climate change and focuses its efforts on reducing greenhouse gases (GHGs), there will be a

<sup>†</sup> ISH Cambridge Energy Research Associates (CERA). Growth in the Canadian Oil Sands: Finding the New Balance, 2009.

*“Any engagement strategy must, by necessity, involve First Nations.”*

necessary transition in the world's energy production and use. The role of oil sands will need to be considered in this broader context. Part of this transition will result in an increasing reliance upon low and non-emitting GHG energy sources, while redefining the global energy systems to ensure secure and reliable energy supplies for future generations. The move to cleaner fuel supplies and technologies will take time to develop and deploy on a massive scale, and so a transition period must be envisioned, within which oil sands have a role. What this role might be is part of the dialogue that must now take place within Canada, as it can also be expected to take place among nations interested in importing Canada's oil supplies.

A number of national policy organizations and think tanks, including the NRTEE and PPF, are contemplating the elements of a Canadian clean energy strategy.<sup>‡</sup> There is a link between this and effective climate change policy as energy supply and demand ultimately drives much of Canada's carbon emissions. Addressing climate change in part through a clean energy lens reinforces this mutual linkage.

### ***Global climate change and Canada's responsibility***

Climate change is one of the most significant environmental and economic challenges facing the planet today. The production of oil sands has been noted nationally and internationally as an important contributor of GHGs to the atmosphere. While current GHG emissions from the oil sands has been cited by some as small in comparison with emissions from other industrial sectors and countries, the projected growth of emissions from the oil sands – rising faster than any other source of emissions in Canada – and what this might mean in terms of increasing absolute GHG emissions has been noted by

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<sup>‡</sup> The NRTEE and PPF are active participants in the Winnipeg Consensus, and were two of the convenors for the Banff Conference. See *Towards a Truly Canadian Clean Energy Strategy. Summary of the Banff Clean Energy Dialogue*. April 8-10, 2010.

others as an important issue. Significant improvement in emissions intensity by the oil sands is noted, but concerns about the absolute contribution of the sector to future emissions growth is a concern by some.

On the global stage, the oil sands have been held up by some as the poster child for “dirty oil”, in an effort to persuade the international community to take note and pressure Canada into taking more action on its own domestic climate change policy as well as subscribing to more stringent international targets and approaches. The federal government has announced a GHG emissions reduction target for 2020 of 17% below 2005 levels (the same as the United States). However some noted that Canada does not yet have a fully-fleshed out plan setting out how we will achieve this national target. The federal government has taken some key steps towards GHG emission reductions, but in the absence of an overarching national strategy that fully incorporates the oil sands we can expect they will remain a target and source of concern for those desiring more action on climate change.



02

## Outcomes of the Meeting

### THE NEED FOR A DIALOGUE

The group was asked to address a few fundamental questions during the meeting:

1. Is there a need for a dialogue on the future of the oil sands?
2. If so, is now the time for this dialogue?
3. What could such a dialogue accomplish?
4. What, if any, are the risks of not pursuing a dialogue?

There was unanimous agreement that there is a need for a dialogue on the future of the oil sands. However there were questions regarding the substance and the timing of this dialogue.

Having established that a dialogue is needed, the group discussed the timing. The answer was unanimous – *now is the time*. Some participants urged the dialogue process to start as soon as possible, as time was of the essence. As one participant clearly put it, as we lose time, we lose options; if we act sooner, then there are more options available.

The question of “are we ready?” was also discussed, and it was noted that there is a need for further exploration, including a clear definition of the objectives of a prospective dialogue and what it could achieve; a reflection on the core issues at stake to focus the dialogue; and a review of existing information on efforts to date so that the dialogue is based on facts and not rhetoric. These issues of substance did not detract from the view that a dialogue was needed now.

What could such a dialogue accomplish? On this point there were diverse views. Many suggested that it would depend upon the definition and scope of the process, and so the possible outcomes will vary depending upon the context and focus. However it was agreed that a dialogue process could help build trust, allow for sharing of information and provide a forum for open and transparent discussions.

One clearly-expressed view was that there were risks in not having a dialogue. Three key risks were most-often cited relating to leadership, polarization of positions and options. The first risk related to leadership was referenced several times throughout the meeting. Simply put: the risk of not having a dialogue on the oil sands and demonstrating leadership on the file will mean that

if we don't lead, others will do it for us. For example, if we do not address the issues related to environmental performance, then others in the international community may define the standards for us, whether they be related to GHG emissions and climate change, carbon capture and sequestration, or fuel standards. The second notable risk is that of further polarization of the debate. If issues are not addressed now in a dialogue, then the risk of further polarization will become greater. Positions will only become further entrenched on all sides, making it harder to build relationships and the trust necessary to move forward in a collaborative way. The final risk discussed was related to timing and options – the longer we wait, the fewer options we may have to choose from.

## A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

During the meeting participants were tasked with identifying the core issues related to the sustainable development of the oil sands. What is most interesting about the outcome of these discussions was the broad-based agreement on many of the key issues. Ultimately, the conclusion was reached that the dialogue needed on oil sands is not necessarily one dialogue, but rather three. Acknowledging the multiple facets of the oil sands issue and different scales at which they have an impact, the group identified the need for three distinct but overlapping dialogues on:

- oil sands performance;
- Canada's clean energy strategy, and the role of oil sands within it; and
- Canada's climate change policy.

The oil sands performance issue was described as the local and regional problems that include the environmental, social and economic effects of current and anticipated development. This includes the issue of water quality, for example.

*“The definition of a crisis is that there are a limited number of options in time. The longer we engage in the debate of ‘oil sands – good, tar sands – bad’, the more time we lose. The dynamics of the tar sands is such that losing time increasingly constrains the actions that we can take on this issue.”*



It was envisioned that a discussion of the issues in this grouping is likely to revolve around not only the questions of how to minimize, mitigate and manage such impacts as water quality, but also the issue of limits or thresholds of acceptable development and exploitation of this resource. The question of *limits versus pace* of development was raised by participants but was not discussed at length. But it is clearly an important issue that needs elaboration in any dialogue as it provides a clear point of divergence. Many stakeholders have suggested placing some type of absolute limits on the development of the oil sands, whereas others have largely discussed the concept of pace of development, not necessarily involving limits.

Canada's clean energy strategy and the role of the oil sands within it was also generally agreed upon as a key dialogue topic. Some participants strongly noted that a discussion of the sustainable development of the oil sands, in the absence of a national dialogue on our future energy mix, didn't make sense. There is a need to assess global energy needs and Canada's potential in helping meet these needs. As we strive to transition to a low carbon future, we need to envision the energy mix of that future, the role of conventional versus renewable energy sources, and how we get there.

Finally, there was almost unanimous agreement that there is an equal need to have a distinct dialogue on Canada's climate change policy, a GHG emissions-reduction plan, and the place of oil sands in that policy. A number of participants viewed federal climate change policy as inadequate overall, although it was noted that some actions were being taken. A desire for further actions on this front were expressed.

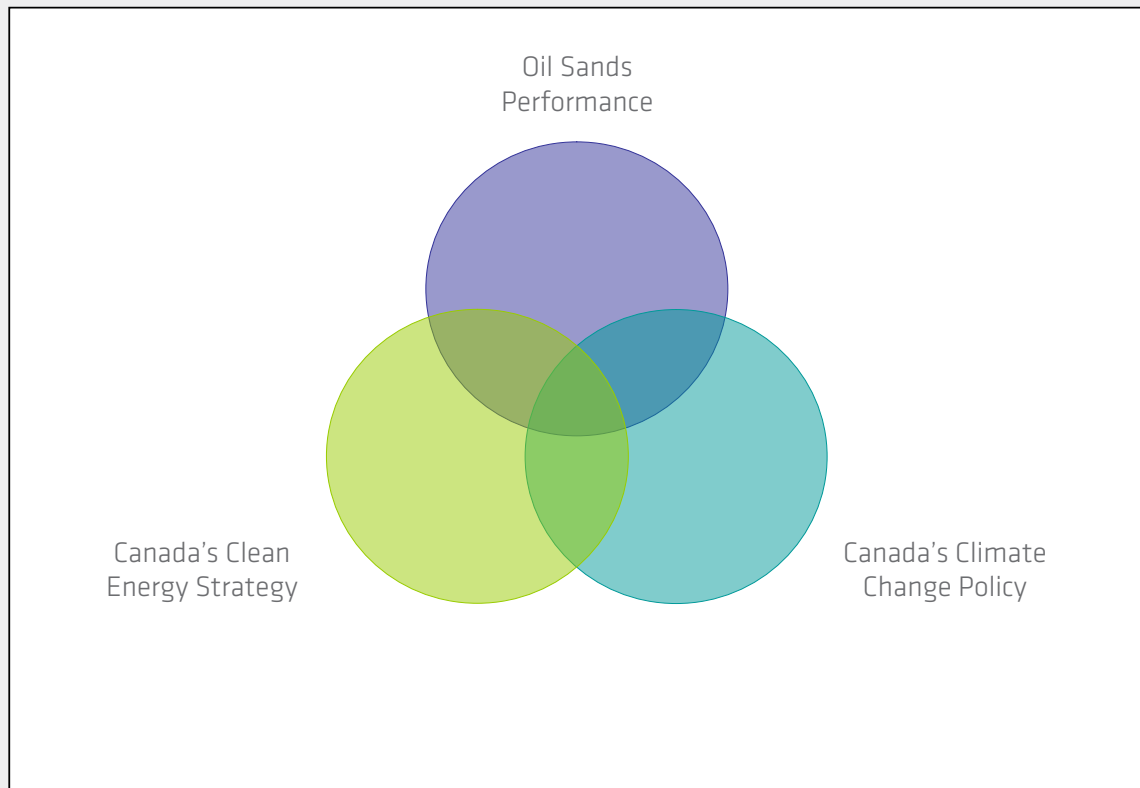
*“There is a strategic cost to inaction, and there is also a political cost to inaction. Internationally, we are too small to influence if we aren't at the table, and we won't be invited to the table if we keep playing this small, defensive game.”*

What became clear is that the proposed “dialogue” is not one but actually three related and ultimately linked dialogues. There are clear policy and political linkages between them and the timing and progress of each dialogue could have effects on the others. The strength of this approach is that it offers a strategic and comprehensive approach; but this strength may also be its weakness as it will require monumental commitment, and as one participant noted, several “leaps of faith”, to sincerely attempt to start all these dialogues. In the end, participants generally agreed that all three of these dialogues were necessary. While, ideally, it was suggested that the three dialogues take place concurrently, there were many who recognized that this would not be realistic or feasible. So which dialogue should take precedence?

For some, the more tangible issue of oil sands performance was the area that they thought should be addressed first. For others, climate change was the most important issue, as this was the most fundamental environmental challenge facing the world and would shape policy actions within the other areas. Others contended that the question of the global energy mix and the role of the oil sands within it was the most pressing issue as this was the most realistic way to make progress on climate issues as these are fundamentally clean energy issues. In the end, most agreed that ideally all three dialogues would be necessary, with some linkages and integration needed.

*“We need to address all three of the dialogues, and the interconnectedness and complexity of the dialogues that need to take place.”*

## OIL SANDS DIALOGUE TOPICS



## CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

A number of dialogue challenges and barriers were discussed. Obviously, the scale and scope of the issue was seen as a significant challenge. Designing a process that had appropriate timeframes and resources to achieve progress was also cited. Participants considered specific barriers that would need to be addressed in order to make progress. These were described by one participant as “must haves that will get people to the table.” For some, these formed pre-conditions for actually embarking upon a dialogue. And while there was not consensus on what all of these pre-conditions should be, the discussion demonstrated participants were actively considering what needed to be addressed in order to proceed further.

These included:

- A commitment to the dialogue from all sectors at senior levels;
- A safe environment that enables different and diverging perspectives to be heard and respected;
- Trust that all participants are open to listening to each others’ perspectives and trying to understand them before jumping to debate;
- Assurances that each participant is participating in an upfront and honest manner towards a common objective and outcome;
- The understanding and acceptance that there will need to be a discussion of limits or thresholds on development, and not just a discussion of pace of development;
- Working from complete and reliable data and information, shared with all participants;
- Transparency in the design of the dialogue process;
- Participation of aboriginal and First Nation representatives at the outset of the process;
- Agreed upon rules of engagement and activity outside of the dialogue.



*“There is an element of honesty that is needed on every side of this issue.”*

If a dialogue process is to be designed, these kinds of pre-conditions will need to be further discussed, refined and agreed upon by all participants in the process. This was seen as a specific next step unto itself.

*“If there is no trust then the product that results will be flawed.”*

*“We are also in a situation where there is duelling science, and this is very confusing for Canadians. We need to address this aspect because it is counterproductive to keep putting opposing science out there.”*



03

## Next Steps and Recommendation

### NEXT STEPS

The meeting concluded with a brief discussion of possible next steps. Where could we go from here? Having concluded earlier that an oil sands dialogue was needed and needed now, the final roundtable discussion by all participants concluded that next steps were both desirable and necessary.

Much of the discussion focused on which of the three dialogues was most important and in need of action in the short-term. While no formal consensus was reached, it was noted by many that the oil sands performance dialogue may be the one that is best positioned to move forward immediately. However the other two dialogues are in need of attention also, and should not be dismissed once the oil sands performance dialogue gets underway. Some participants cautioned against taking on too much and therefore possibly not making any progress at all. Related to this idea was the view that there are limited resources, both human and financial, to participate in comprehensive dialogue processes and that there would need to be a commitment of resources to enable all to participate effectively.

Several participants noted that in order to move forward with any dialogue there is a need for clarity of purpose, objectives, outcomes and process. In order to get the answers to these questions, the group sketched out a three-step design approach that could be used to structure a dialogue process.

#### Step 1: Define the objectives and the scope of the dialogue

A clear articulation of the objectives of the dialogue is necessary. While set at a high level, this statement needs to be clear and focused. This will set the boundaries for the dialogue. Issues to be included need to be defined. Knowing the objectives and scope of the work will allow determination of who to involve, possible timeframes, and potential outcomes.

#### Step 2: Develop the options for a dialogue

This would help set priorities for the three dialogue topic areas, linkages among them, and consideration of who should convene each dialogue and who should participate.

*“An important next step is to explore what we need in terms of the oil sands performance dialogue - this doesn’t mean we ignore the other two, but recognizes that we can’t solve everything all at once.”*

### Step 3: Select the optimal dialogue process

Once options are developed, there is a need to evaluate and select the optimal dialogue process. While the criteria for selection should be carefully chosen, as a starting point the following were suggested:

- The degree to which the option will achieve the objectives
- The feasibility of the option
- The challenges associated with the option, including potential barriers
- The timelines necessary to allow the process to be completed
- The necessary resources for implementation
- The positioning of the issue alongside other ongoing initiatives.

This proposed approach is meant as a catalyst for further thinking and framing of the design process; it is meant as a starting point for designing a dialogue. Successfully pursued, it becomes the Terms of Reference for any dialogue and the start of actual conversations.

## RECOMMENDATION

Participants understood that following the session, the NRTEE and PPF would consider and offer recommendations on next steps. These would be our considered views, having listened to and facilitated the discussion, as to where and how we could most usefully make progress.

We were struck by the recognition of all participants that Canada needs to move beyond the current debate as it now stands and believe that the three topic areas identified are fundamental.

*“The role of government could be to help people understand the complexity of the issues.”*



We believe that a viable opportunity exists now to commence and make progress on a dialogue on the issue of oil sands performance. It is clear that there are a number of committed stakeholders and organizations willing and able to enter into this discussion today. Mechanisms exist to engage stakeholders, and can be modified to take our dialogue session conclusions into account. There is arguably more progress to be made in the near to mid-term on this issue, given the significant amount of time and effort that has already gone into trying to understand some of the more important environmental, social and economic issues. Properly constructed and implemented, this offers a solid opportunity now to start building trust that will assist with future dialogues and help create better conditions for making progress on the clean energy and climate change dialogues.

While there was discussion that all three dialogues – oil sands performance, Canada’s clean energy strategy, and Canada’s climate change policy – should proceed concurrently, the reality is that they will likely need to occur in stages. All three will involve different actors, with different issues, on different scales and timeframes. As we have all seen, there will need to be significant political discussions and decisions required to get movement on both the climate change file and the clean energy strategy for Canada. As a result, it will take more time and effort to get the right kind of commitment on having a dialogue on either of these two topics, although some new progress is being made on the clean energy file. But despite these challenges, it is very important that these dialogues start to take shape; in fact, they are imperative if Canada is to better position itself globally on both climate change and on a clean-energy future. And, properly done, they will reinforce progress on the oil sands performance file.

For these reasons, the NRTEE and PPF recommend that industry, government, ENGOs, and the First Nations communities proceed now on advancing a dialogue on the issue of oil sands performance. Doing so will enable action on the ground immediately and help build trust and momentum.

Meanwhile, a representative group of ENGO, industry, government and First Nation leaders should be convened in a forum to consider how to make progress on the other aspects of the oil sands dialogue. In the same spirit shown by our Fernie roundtable, we believe this would hold the real possibility of moving the current situation in the oil sands from debate to dialogue, with positive outcomes for all parties involved.



04

Appendices

## MEETING PARTICIPANTS

*Note:* As the sessions took place in the fall of 2010, some participants' titles and organizations might have changed.

### **Dave Collyer**

President  
Canadian Association of  
Petroleum Producers

### **Brenda Kenny**

President  
Canadian Energy Pipeline  
Association

### **Gordon Peeling**

President and CEO  
Mining Association of  
Canada

### **Mark Corey**

Assistant Deputy Minister  
Natural Resources Canada  
Energy Sector

### **Gordon Lambert**

Vice President  
Sustainable Development  
Suncor

### **Marlo Reynolds**

Executive Director  
Pembina Institute

### **Jim Ellis**

Deputy Minister  
Government of Alberta  
Department of  
Environment

### **Elaine McCoy**

Senator  
Senate of Canada

### **Colin Robertson**

Distinguished Senior  
Fellow  
Norman Paterson School  
of International Affairs

### **Phil Fontaine**

Special Advisor  
Royal Bank of Canada

### **Ken Ogilvie**

Executive Director  
Emeritus  
Pollution Probe;  
Board Member  
Pembina Institute

### **Wishart Robson**

Senior Advisor on Safety  
and Climate Change to the  
CEO  
Nexen Inc.

### **Arlin Hackman**

Vice President &  
Chief Conservation  
Officer  
WWF Canada

### **Robert Page, Ph.D.**

TransAlta Professor of  
Environmental  
Management and  
Sustainability  
University of Calgary;  
Chair  
National Round Table on  
the Environment and the  
Economy

### **David Runnalls**

Distinguished Fellow  
International Institute for  
Sustainable Development

### **Chris Henderson**

Founder  
Delphi Group;  
President  
Lumos Energy

### **Merran Smith**

Director  
Energy Initiative  
Tides Foundation

### **Larry Innes**

Executive Director  
Canadian Boreal Initiative

### **Rick Smith**

Executive Director  
Environmental Defence

**Stephanie Sterling**

Vice President  
Business and JV  
Management  
Heavy Oil  
Shell Canada

**Arlene Strom**

Vice President  
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**Peter Watson**

Deputy Minister  
Government of Alberta  
Department of Energy

**David McLaughlin**

President and CEO  
National Round Table on  
the Environment and the  
Economy

**David Mitchell**

President and CEO  
Public Policy Forum

**GUEST SPEAKERS****Bruce Anderson**

Senior Associate  
Harris-Decima;  
Senior Vice President  
National Public Relations

**Thomas Homer-Dixon**

Professor  
Centre for International  
Governance  
Innovation Chair for  
Global Systems  
University of Waterloo

# ANNOTATED MEETING AGENDA

## **MONDAY, AUGUST 30: 18:00 – 21:00**

### **Commencing the Dialogue: Welcome and Introduction**

This opening welcome session will:

- Allow meeting participants to start to get to know each other;
- Provide a brief overview of the purpose of and expectations for the meeting;
- Initiate participants' thinking about the meeting's objectives by providing a thought-provoking presentation leading to a roundtable discussion.

*Guest Speaker: Thomas Homer-Dixon*

Thomas Homer-Dixon holds the Centre for International Governance Innovation Chair of Global Systems at the Balsillie School of International Affairs in Waterloo, Canada, and is a Professor in the Centre for Environment and Business in the Faculty of Environment, University of Waterloo. His most recent books include: *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization* (2006), and *Carbon Shift: How the Twin Crises of Oil Depletion and Climate Change Will Define the Future* (2009). Professor Homer-Dixon will lead off the evening's discussions with an insightful perspective of his views on the oil sands, within the context of the thesis of his book *The Upside of Down*.

## **TUESDAY, AUGUST 31 : 8:30-21:00**

### **8:30 - 9:45**

#### **Working Session I – Is an oil sands dialogue needed now?**

Session I will encourage participants to start thinking about the need and potential for a dialogue about the future of the oil sands. To initiate the discussion participants will be asked to reflect upon where we are today with the debates regarding oil sands developments, how we got to this point, and options for moving forward. Participants will be asked to consider potential approaches that may be beneficial to commencing a dialogue.

Over the course of the two day meeting four key questions will be posed. These questions will be introduced in Session I, for participants to start thinking about, and will then be revisited at the end of the meeting in Session IV:

- Is there a need for a dialogue on the future of the oil sands?
- If so, is now the time for this dialogue?
- What could such a dialogue accomplish?
- What, if any, are the risks of not pursuing a dialogue?

### **10:00 – 12:00**

#### **Working Session II – What are the core issues at stake?**

The purpose of Session II is to identify the key substantive issues that would need to be addressed in a dialogue – environmental, economic and social. Participants will be asked to present and discuss the issues from their own perspectives and experiences.

Key questions for exploration are:

- What are the most important issues facing the sustainable development of Alberta's oil sands? (these may include, but not limited to, global attention, environmental impacts, economic significance, social considerations)
- What specific external factors affect how these issues are viewed now, and may be addressed in the future?
- How could these issues be accommodated in a dialogue process?

**13:00 – 16:00**

### **Working Session III – What are the options for a collaborative dialogue process?**

The purpose of Session III is to explore and discuss the possible options that could be considered as part of a collaborative dialogue on the oil sands.\* The components could range from traditional consultation methods: questionnaires; public hearings, meetings or panels; focus group interviews and workshops; roundtables or public forums; and steering/advisory committees. The options could also include more novel, contemporary methods such as community panels, citizen juries, E-consultations or community cultural development techniques. The potential core elements of such a process – structure, format, participants and timing – may also be discussed.

To initiate the discussion participants will be asked to share their views on the history of collaborative efforts in the oil sands to date, with a view to identify:

- What has worked?
- What has failed?
- What are the lessons that we should take from these experiences?

Participants will also be asked to share their ideas and lessons from other collaborative initiatives outside the oil sands that may be informative.†

**18:30 – 21:00**

### **Dinner Discussion**

*Guest Speaker: Bruce Anderson  
The New Environmentalism*

Bruce Anderson, Senior Consulting Associate of Harris/Decima, will open up the evening's discussion with an informative and engaging presentation on his research of Canadian attitudes on oil sands (environmental and economic impacts).

## **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1: 8:30-12:00**

**8:30-11:30**

### **Working Session IV: What's Next?**

The purpose of this final session is to ask participants to return to some of the questions and discussions of the previous day and a half. While many questions will have been touched upon, the specific intent here will be to attempt to identify some possible answers to these questions. Finally, the session will wrap-up with some thinking about possible next steps beyond this meeting.

Key questions for exploration are:

- If a collaborative process was agreed upon, what would be needed for a successful foundation?
- What are the barriers to be overcome?
- What are the next steps to be taken?

**11:30 – 12:00**

### **Meeting Wrap-up**

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\* Participants should refer to the recent NRTEE-PPF report *Progress Through Process* (2010) and Annex of the Agenda for the 8 Elements of Successful Collaborative Governance for Sustainable Development.

† As an example, see PPF summary of the Canadian Boreal Initiative (2010).

# NATIONAL ROUND TABLE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY: ABOUT US

Emerging from the famous Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE or Round Table) has become a model for convening diverse and competing interests around one table to create consensus ideas and viable suggestions for sustainable development.

The NRTEE focuses on sustaining Canada's prosperity without borrowing resources from future generations or compromising their ability to live securely.

The NRTEE is in the unique position of being an independent policy advisory agency that advises the federal government on sustainable development solutions. We raise awareness among Canadians and their governments about the challenges of sustainable development. We advocate for positive change. We strive to promote credible and impartial policy solutions that are in the best interest of all Canadians based on research, stakeholder engagement, and consideration by Round Table members.

We accomplish that mission by fostering sound, well-researched reports on priority issues and by offering advice to governments on how best to reconcile and integrate the often divergent challenges of economic prosperity and environmental conservation.

The NRTEE brings together a group of distinguished sustainability leaders active in businesses, universities, environmentalism, labour, public policy, and community life from across Canada. Our members are appointed by the federal government for a mandate of up to three years. They meet in a round table format that offers a safe haven for discussion and encourages the unfettered exchange of ideas leading to consensus. This is how we reconcile positions that have traditionally been at odds.

We also reach out to expert organizations, industries, and individuals to assist us in conducting our work on behalf of Canadians. These partners help spark our creativity, challenge our thinking, and generate the momentum needed for success.

The *NRTEE Act* underlines the independent nature of the Round Table and its work. The NRTEE reports, at this time, to the Government of Canada and Parliament through the Minister of the Environment.

The NRTEE maintains a secretariat, which commissions and analyzes the research required by its members in their work. The secretariat furnishes research, administrative, promotional, and communications support for NRTEE activities and operations.



National Round Table  
on the Environment  
and the Economy

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## PUBLIC POLICY FORUM: ABOUT US

### *Building Better Government*

The Public Policy Forum is an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of government in Canada through enhanced dialogue among the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Forum's members, drawn from business, federal, provincial and territorial governments, the voluntary sector and organized labour, share a belief that an efficient and effective public service is important in ensuring Canada's competitiveness abroad and quality of life at home.

Established in 1987, the Forum has earned a reputation as a trusted, non-partisan facilitator, capable of bringing together a wide range of stakeholders in productive dialogue. Its research program provides a neutral base to inform collective decision making. By promoting information-sharing and greater links between governments and other sectors, the Forum helps ensure public policy in our country is dynamic, coordinated and responsive to future challenges and opportunities.



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