



March 6, 2008

Alberta's Professional Engineers and Geoscientists have Stake in Climate Change Debate

Edmonton – Our climate is changing. That change poses a significant risk to both the public and the environment, according to Alberta's professional engineers and geoscientists. Results of a recent survey by APEGGA, the largest self-regulating group of professionals in Alberta, reveal that engineering and geoscience professionals believe they must take the effects of climate change into consideration because of their role as guardians of public safety and the environment.

While virtually all respondents (99.4%) agree that climate change is a reality, they disagree as to the causes – human (26%), natural (27%), or a combination (45%). In fact, only a third of them (32%) believe the debate on the scientific causes of climate change is settled.

There is general agreement that climate change is both regional and global (78.7%) and that it may result in both warming and cooling (83%). The majority (65.7%) believe that there are changes to both the average temperature and variability (severe weather) of the climate.

Only a third (32%) of respondents believe the Alberta Government's climate change action plan is adequate. Respondents say government should take the lead in developing renewable and sustainable energy (68.8%), promoting energy efficiency to the public (67.9%) and making the province a carbon capture centre of excellence (50.6%).

They also identify a need to reinforce the role of professional engineers and geoscientists as corporate technical advisors. Only a third (31%) agree that they are currently considered valuable technical advisors on climate change within their organizations. Just over a quarter (26%) believe they are able to influence corporate decision making. Two thirds (66%) state that corporate decision making is governed by short-term cost considerations rather than long-term investment.

A total of 1,077 online and hard-copy surveys were received, a sample size considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points (19 times out of 20).

Established in 1920, APEGGA is responsible for regulating the practices of engineering, geology and geophysics in the province of Alberta. The association's more than 51,000 members play a significant role in every segment of the economy and their technical and management expertise ensure Alberta remains at the forefront of technological innovation.

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Backgrounder attached.

For more information, please contact:

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APEGGA Member Climate Survey Report

Edmonton – The Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA) asked its more than 51,000 members about their beliefs and values around climate change. APEGGA consulted with Alberta Environment and various environmental non-governmental organizations to finalize the topics and wording of the questions. A total of 1,077 online and hard-copy surveys were received, a sample size considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points (19 times out of 20).

Results

- 99.4% agree that the climate is changing
- 78.7% agree that the climate is changing both regionally and globally
- 83% agree that climate change may result in both warming and cooling
- 65.7% believe that there are changes to both the average temperature and variability of the climate
- 20.2% believe that there are changes to the average climate only
- 14.1% believe that there are changes to the variability only
- 55.3% believe that there are both long- and short-term effects
- 28.8% believe there are long-term effects only
- 11.6% believe that there are short-term effects only
- 27.4% believe climate change is caused by primarily natural factors (natural variation, volcanoes, sunspots, lithosphere motions)
- 25.7% believe it is caused by primarily human factors (burning fossil fuels, changing land use, enhanced water evaporation due to irrigation)
- 45.2% believe that climate change is caused by both human and natural factors
- 68% disagree with the statement “the debate on the scientific causes of recent climate change is settled”
- 66% do not feel pressured by their peers to take a certain stance on climate change
- 59% do not feel like they must base their professional work on factors other their solid scientific principles
- 80% base their work on scientific principles
- 70% have sufficient independence to properly consider climate change
- 31% agree that they are considered to be valuable technical advisors regarding climate change within their organizations
- 26% believe they are able to influence corporate decision making
- 66% state that corporate decision making is governed by short-term cost considerations rather than long-term investment



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Government's Role

- become a leader in developing renewable/sustainable energy 68.8%
- become a national leader in promoting energy efficiency to the public 67.9%
- become a centre of excellence for carbon capture and sequestration 50.6%
- become a centre of excellence for clean coal 48%
- become a national leader in emission regulation 45.7%

APEGGA's Role

- provide technical / policy advice to government 65.2%
- provide education to the public 63.4%
- promote best practices 63.3%

Recommendations

- APEGGA should support scientifically informed debate
- APEGGA should facilitate the provision of technical and policy advice to government
- APEGGA should host an environmental summit in 2008 focusing on technologies and policies regarding climate science (Alberta climate change modeling), mitigation strategies (CO₂ capture and sequestration, renewable/ sustainable energy, cleaner non-renewables) and adaptation strategies (water usage, improved energy efficiency)

Note: a copy of *Member Consultation on Climate Change Report to Council: A Survey by APEGGA's Environment Committee, February 2008* is available online at <http://www.apegga.org/Environment/reports/ClimateChangesurveyreport.pdf>

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