

Minutes for the Advisory Board Teleconference
Understanding Industrial Development in Alberta's Communities

Friday, July 11, 2003

3:00 – 4:15 pm

Held at: 1 – 26 ESB, University of Alberta

Members present:

Ward Toma	General Manager of the Alberta Canola Producers Commission
Anne Brown	Heartland Citizens' Coalition
Larry Wall	President of the Alberta Industrial Heartland
Duane Yaworski	Executive Secretary of Alberta Surface Rights Federation
Barb Korol	Communications at Dow Chemical
Jeff Masuda	Co-principal investigator
Leah Gold	Project Manager

Regrets:

Rick Sloan	Alberta Tourism and Industry
Ernie VanBoom	Alberta Potato Producers' Association
Jennifer Klimek	Environmental Law Centre
Yvonne Sinkewich	Peace River Organic Producers' Association

Agenda:

1. Introduce new members: Jennifer, Barb, Ernie
2. Introduce Leah
3. Purpose of this meeting: to review the first draft of the preliminary results.
4. Meeting location – worth it to locate in Fort Sask?
5. Project activities to-date:
 - a. Still collecting documents i.e. media, etc.
 - b. Nearly finished first round of interviews, planning for second round in late July and August
 - c. Hired two transcriptionists
 - d. Presented preliminary results at the CAG in Victoria
 - e. Starting to plan for next round, hence this meeting
6. Combining Agenda items 3 and 4, as the CARCI report contains the main results
7. Go through CARCI, highlighting important points in each section
8. Discussion items.
9. Planning for Phase 3
 - a. Working on selection criteria for including participants – if we decide that we need broader representation, will have to do a pre-interview with new participants
 - b. Once complete, will spend some time in data analysis before conducting the group interviews
10. Next meeting date? Probably some time in September, but would like to correspond electronically/fax to follow up on CARCI drafts and Phase 3 planning.

Questions for committee discussion:

1. What “stands out” the most from this document as important or new information for you?
2. What are some similarities and/or differences in your experiences with your stakeholder community?
3. Are there any underrepresented views? (note that this is based on only 11 interviews so far)
4. How would you be able to use the information so far (may be useful to put in a section called “community relevance”)

Discussion:

- Barb introduced herself as a new member. She works with public affairs, public consultation, and facilitates the Public Advisory Committee for Dow Chemicals. The Advisory Committee has 10 members, and meets 6 times a year.
- Leah introduced herself as Project Manager for Jeff during the summer.
- Jeff asked the advisory board if they would be interested in meeting in Fort Saskatchewan as a more convenient location. Barb offered a conference room at Dow.
- Jeff went over the highlights of the project as outlined in the Interim Report #1.
- Jeff then went over the questions to be posed to the advisory board.
- Leah went over the section of document retrieval and asked for any suggestions to facilitate the project.
- Barb offered to talk to Dave at Dow to get anything that they may have on file and Larry Wall offered to see what he has for additional documents. Other suggestions from those present included the Morinville Mirror and the Free Press, the St. Albert Gazette, Sherwood Park News, and the Redwater Review. Leah took note. Also some of these papers have already been contacted and it has been established that they do not keep their past papers.
- Jeff went over some of the preliminary findings of the interviews. In reference to a quote on page 10, Ward asked if there was any truth to the story that a farmer found his land on sale on the internet without being advised. Larry Wall responded that the only time that land appeared for sale on the internet was if a land owner gave permission for it. Jeff responded that such stories, though they may be myths become important stories for people and add to their own general perception of what is happening.
- Jeff asked for comments on the interviewing process. Larry asked if Jeff inquired if people were employed by industry. Jeff replied that people were forthcoming with this information and that about 65 – 70 % of the people were indeed employed by industry.

- Jeff asked the first question for committee discussion
- Duane replied that what stood out for him was the struggle that people had in realizing the importance of industry at the same time as struggling with how to deal with it. Jeff responded that in no case did people say that they wanted industry out, but that they wanted to be included in the processes.
- Jeff asked the second discussion question:
- Ward replied that there were some similarities, that people were concerned about industry but not against it, that they enjoyed the economic spin-off from it, but worried about the environment. He added that the “urban myth” story about the internet was one that he was familiar with.
- Anne added as a revision that she believes that the “myth” shows to what extent people feel threatened. Not knowing what the Alberta Heartland was at the time, may have led some to sincerely believe that their land was for sale without their permission.
- Duane added that has seen similar reactions from his perspective with the Alberta Surface Rights Federation, and that people are more upset that they are not involved, that their views are not represented and that they don’t receive the information in a form that they understand.
- Larry expressed that one must keep in mind that the Heartland area is where people live their lives, it is not just a boundary line. He added that the policy of the AIH is to discourage residential living, that there is a strategy of depopulation. The similarity that he noticed was the effect of “public input fatigue”, when people eventually become drained by the process of public consultation. He added that the process of public consultation does not address the minority groups. As well, the public involvement process, rather than finding solutions *for* people needs to find solutions *with* people. Larry also mentioned that the Fort Air Partnership has also felt frustrated and has struggled to get public involvement, but it seems that people are tired.
- Anne added that there is definitely evidence of public input fatigue; if one does not show up to a meeting, then people believe that they are no longer interested, but that the process does not allow for people that are trying to participate. She acknowledged that the people feel as though the power is in the hands of a few.
- Anne added as a revision that people need to see that the public process is legitimate. When they feel they are not being heard or that a decision has already been made, they become frustrated and tired. Due to peoples busy lives, they want the process to be meaningful, and when they are refused the opportunity to have dialogue with decision makers, they feel hopeless. She heard comments that people felt like the process was designed to tire people so they would give up.

- Ward included that only those really committed are writing in the media and this may be cause for the increased polarization.
- Larry added in reference to public input fatigue, that many people believe that their views are being represented, so they don't come to the meetings, or that the opposite may occur – Larry gets many people coming to discuss 1 on 1 with him.
- Barb asked that if, in light of the media being driven by controversy, can we conclude that the increased polarization in the media actually reflects the reality in the public realm? She suggested, as an alternative to basing our findings on the media, that we look at the percentage of people actually going to the public meetings, the letters to the government as well as the volume of calls to the regulators as a representation of the mood of the community. She added that FOIP may be a source for that information.
- Anne added as a revision that she is concerned about media being excluded as a valuable source of information. She personally had asked Sturgeon County on several occasions to send information to her neighbourhood and they refused on the grounds that they had fulfilled their legal requirements. With these limited means, the media has become an important means of communication for people. Citizens have less resources than industry and municipalities to communicate information. There are few sources for people to have their views heard as many are uncomfortable in this situation; some fear for their jobs, some are intimidated by the power of government and industry, and some are afraid to be sued as they have limited resources.
- Jeff suggested that written comments be made for the last question of the agenda.
- Barb asked if Jeff would present his final findings to their Community Advisory Panel at Dow.
- Anne commented that were hopes were that this project may help to change policies so mistakes are not repeated, and reiterated that her group is not *against* industry
- Larry believes that he would be able to use the findings later on as they become more substantiated, he hopes that they may be able to engage people more in the future.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15

Respectfully submitted
Leah Gold
July 15, 2003