

COMMENTS

MP Kevin Sorenson meets with Prime Minister Stephen Harper

Crowfoot MP Kevin Sorenson met this week with Conservative Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper and the Hon. Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board.

"It was a meeting with the two most important federal government officials to my riding," Sorenson said.

"I had direct access and my say. I brought forward concerns that have been expressed to me by farmers and others involved in the agricultural sector of my constituency of Crowfoot. These federal government officials listened.

"At one point, there were about a half dozen of us meeting with the Prime Minister, who stayed with us far beyond the scheduled time. I was

impressed with his wide scope of knowledge concerning the issues in Canada's agriculture community.

"He was aware of the problems in our industry and recognized the challenges we face. Agriculture Minister Strahl spent many hours with us, including dinner. We discussed grains and oilseeds, the problems with the CAIS program, grain transportation, producer and production support versus that for the processing and food industry, low commodity prices and high input costs, bio diesel and bio ethanol fuels, beef, trade and borders, Canadian Wheat Board and all of the government farm programs and spending.

"The Minister spoke about what he has been learning from his departmental offi-



MP'S REPORT
Kevin Sorenson
Crowfoot MP

cial and we provided him with a 'full basket' of our views and information to take back to his office.

"I am looking forward to the Throne Speech. I don't expect any 'quick fixes', but I anticipate a change in the way our federal government responds to Canada's agriculture sector.

"My colleagues and I in the Conservative government are committed to bringing changes to the federal government – that is what Canadians voted for. Already, I can see that there is a positive change in Ottawa," Sorenson added.

Public concern over Rosebud water supply simply unfounded

Misinformation spread by some area landowners and inaccuracies in both newspaper and television reports about water safety in the hamlet of Rosebud is proving to be damaging to Rosebud Theatre, one of Alberta's most popular arts organizations and tourism attractions.

"It has been a frustrating time for us," says Rosebud Theatre Executive Director Bob Davis.

"Some of our patrons have been openly questioning the health and safety of the community water supply. We understand that it is safe and that testing meets all current provincial standards. For anyone to publicly claim otherwise is misleading, irresponsible and wrong."

Since the airing of televised news reports in early March, and subsequent newspaper reports about the impact of coal bed methane exploration in the Rosebud area, public perception has been forming that the water sources throughout the Rosebud region are being negatively affected.

Davis goes on to point out that, "In the past two weeks we have been fending off

accusations from suppliers, patrons and season ticket holders that our water is unsafe. Their perceptions about Rosebud's water supply have unfortunately been influenced by news media generated stories that are not based on fact.

"We know that the residential and commercial water meters within the hamlet are on a municipally operated supply. Part of the public perception problem is that people tend to lump the water problems of private wells with the municipal system. We have every confidence that the municipal supply operated by Wheatland County is safe."

In a statement issued by Wheatland County March 23, Wheatland County Reeve Ben Armstrong goes on record: "As stated at the March 15, 2006 Rosebud community meeting, the county diligently follows the standards for water monitoring as set out by the provincial government. To date, all monitoring and testing at the new, temporary, and old water treatment facilities in Rosebud have met and complied with provincial standards."

Bob Davis
Rosebud, AB

EnCana clarifies practices relating to gas completions

The Wheatland Surface Rights Action Group (WSRAG) has brought to our attention that our most recent *In Your Community* column, which ran the week of March 6, may have been unclear.

I am writing this letter, on behalf of EnCana, to provide further clarification on our practices relating to shallow gas and coalbed methane (CBM) completions.

EnCana tests local water wells before it drills. In fact in the Chinook BU (includes areas within Wheatland, Kneehill and Vulcan counties, and the Municipal District of Rockyview), as part of our CBM drilling program in which we've drilled 1600 CBM well, we've tested over 800 water wells.

Our practice related to pre-drill testing of water wells continuously evolves and improves with input from stakeholders. Currently, in the Chinook Business Unit, we test wells up to 1000 m from our drilling programs. While the majority of water wells in this area are 50 to 60

metres deep, we have made a hard boundary in our Chinook Business Unit to not complete any wells in coal or sand formations shallower than 175 metres.

We made this decision in the spring of 2005, and prior to this time each of our completion teams reviewed the depth of surrounding water wells to ensure completion depths would be safely below the water well depths.

Prior to this decision, from 1994 and the spring of 2005, between 40 and 50 natural gas wells (of over 5,000 drilled) were perforated in sand and coal formations above 175 metres. Of these, 17 wells are currently producing gas (as of February 2006) from a number of formations. Of all the wells perforated above 175 metres, approximately 80 per cent were completed for CBM, the rest were completed for conventional sand formations.

Perforating is the first step in completing a well. Once prospective gas bearing formations are identified holes are shot in the

steel casing and cement sheath to allow gas from the formations to enter the wellbore.

In February 2006, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board issued Directive 027, which outlines criteria for the completion of formations above 200m or near water wells.

To stimulate or fracture coal seams for gas recovery, EnCana uses pure nitrogen gas – the main element of the air we breathe. And although the Horseshoe Canyon CBM coal region is virtually free of water, provincial regulations require disposal of brackish water through reinjection deep underground.

We appreciate having the opportunity to discuss the concerns of the community and want to ensure that our practices relating to shallow gas and CBM completions is clearly stated and understood.

Sincerely,
Stacy Knull
Vice-President, Chinook
Business Unit
EnCana

More participation of the provinces on federal decisions would be good

Does "open federalism", as Mr. Harper calls it, mean the weakening of federal authority and its ability to respond to national issues such as finance and social universality, or does it mean more participation of the provinces in decision making on the national level?

I would agree with the latter, and fight vehemently the former.

I tend to believe that Mr. Harper, based upon past comments, and the strong

"reform" base of the membership of the Conservative Party, that the goal is 10 autonomous states—basically, a watering down to the lowest denominator of federal powers versus provincial.

Give all the provinces what Quebec demands, and voila! we have national unity. But at what cost both economically and socially?

Chris Schnurr
Windsor, Ont.

Green Party leader offers suggestions for Stephen Harper's Throne Speech

"The Green Party has a vision for Canada," said Jim Harris, leader of the Green Party of Canada, at a press conference on Parliament Hill last week.

"We understand Mr. Harper has his priorities. We also understand that almost 700,000 Canadians voted for the Green Party in January," added Harris, "and they voted for us so that we could represent their views in the House of Commons. An antiquated electoral system is the only thing stopping us."

Harris requested that Mr. Harper seriously consider all aspects of what it means to have a healthy Canada.

"Standing up for Canada means delivering a balanced budget, supporting our communities, and ensuring the health of our planet," said Harris.

"During the climate change talks in Montreal last December, worldwide consensus was reached that the time for the green movement has come. Global awareness around ecological issues has reached new heights and the green movement is becoming an economic and political force. The need for clean air and fresh water bind us all together."

Harris requested that Mr. Harper:

Respect our Kyoto commitments. Using legislation and fiscal incentives we can meet our greenhouse gas emission targets and continue to build Canada's international reputation and credibility as a country that honours its environmental responsibilities.

Strike a citizen's committee on democratic reform and hold a national referendum to implement their recommendations. We need an electoral system that will recognize the contribution of all political parties and help them work together.

Reduce income tax while introducing new taxes on pollution.

Work to amend the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to include the right of all Canadians to clean air and water.

Pass the Canada Well-Being Measurement Act and implement the Canadian Index of Well-Being so that our economic success reflects our actual quality of life without attaching value to ecological and social catastrophes.

Submitted by Cameron Wigmore
Drumheller, AB
CEO, Crowfoot Electoral District Assoc
Green Party of Canada

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