Good morning everyone, and welcome back, I hope you had a good break.

My name is Tracy Walden, and I’m the Director of Media and Communications at CanWEA.

It's my privilege to open this session on wind energy and community engagement.
The voice of Canada’s wind energy industry, actively promoting the responsible and sustainable growth of wind energy.

As a communications director, my entire mandate at CanWEA is focussed on engagement with stakeholders on behalf of the industry.
At CanWEA, we spend a lot of our efforts focussed on engaging with the decision makers that have the power or in some way the ability to impact the electricity grid and the role for wind energy on the grid.

The purpose of this session is to take a closer look at engagement with another equally important audience of stakeholders that also holds tremendous power to shape the path forward for the industry.

We’ll be talking about the local communities that host wind farms where people live and work – where wind turbines are part of the day-to-day experience.
The ability of the industry to engage effectively with these local communities will have a direct impact on the success of the entire industry in this province.
Gaining community support, or earning social licence to operate, requires a focussed strategy and a lot of hard work. It isn’t something the industry can’t take for granted.

Photo credit - http://www.thegreenage.co.uk/why-do-people-hate-wind-turbines/
And it isn’t something you can do without asking questions, listening and collaborating with representatives of the communities, and within the communities. That’s why today’s panel includes representation from five groups: the municipalities, farmers, First Nations, proponents, and clean energy advocates. The idea is to bring these representatives together share their unique perspectives on best practices for gaining support from communities.
To warm you up for the panel, I’m going to speak for a few minutes about what makes this discussion so urgent and why it is relevant for the entire industry and not just the developers operating within the communities.

I will also provide an update on what CanWEA is doing with our guide on Best Practices for Community Engagement and Public Consultation.

So, about the urgency – the train is moving...
I think it is a pretty safe bet that most people in this room are aware that with Alberta’s transition from coal to renewables we’re talking about the development in the range of 5,000 MW of new renewable energy capacity.

If you consider that Alberta has just shy of 1500 MW today, that means we’re looking at a three-fold expansion in just 13 years.
Findings: Wind is Part of the Solution

“Alberta can accommodate up to 17,000 of wind (50% of electricity demand) by 2025, far exceeding the province's target [of 5000 MW/30% by 2030].”

From the perspective of grid operations and grid integration, we know that kind of rapid growth is doable, it’s achievable.

You may have seen the PCWIS study CanWEA released last year with GE that shows that Alberta’s grid can handle a lot more wind than the current target of 5000 MW. Let’s have a look at where these communities will be located as wind expands in the next few years.
Here’s a map from the PCWIS study. It marks all the best wind resources. It gives us an idea of where wind energy will be closest to home for Albertans and local communities.

You can see, for the most part, that means rural communities in the southern part of the province.

Meeting current targets, or going further and maximising Alberta’s potential, will mean many more projects in many more communities.

It will mean more individuals seeing and experiencing wind energy up close.
Economic Benefits to Communities

property tax payments
landowner lease payments
contributions to community-based initiatives
local job creation

It will mean more opportunities to bring significant economic benefits to these communities
– through property tax payments, landowner lease payments, contributions to community-based initiatives, and local job creation –
but only if residents are ready to accept wind farms as a long-term part of their communities.
Creating conditions for this support demands that the industry work hard to increase broad-based perceptions of the industry as legitimate, credible, and trustworthy.

These are the qualities at the core of earning social license and maintaining it over the long-term.

It has been a big achievement for the wind industry globally, in Canada, and here in Alberta to build the supportive policy environment that we have, and we have good reason to feel super pumped about what’s in store.
Alberta offers the greatest potential for the industry in all of Canada, and literally, there are people from all over the world watching and listening.
I love to tell people about what we saw last fall, at CanWEA’s annual conference in Calgary, when Minister Shannon Phillips made the announcement that the Alberta government would be legislating its target of 30 per cent renewable electricity by 2030.

CanWEA’s website traffic went crazy. We had more hits on that day than any other day in the history of the CanWEA website.
We also had nearly 40 accredited media representatives at that event and 8 cameras.

It became obvious that people care about this transition and what it means for the province and for Canada.

The opportunity that we have here in Alberta is big news in the energy world.
But in all of our excitement, we must not forget that the world does not necessarily revolve around energy news or our news.

Not everyone knows or feels the same about wind energy and everything it can do to address the serious economic and environmental challenges we all face. There are unique stakeholders groups whose perspectives and needs vary greatly. They can vary from each other and from industry.

For wind energy, understanding the needs of communities is necessary for our collective success.

The only way the industry will get from 1500 MW to 5000 MW is one wind farm at a time.

And as each project moves through the stages of development – planning, siting, construction, commissioning, operating, decommissioning – the level of support can fluctuate.
Public Opinion Fluctuates

Influencing Factors – much more than just the FACTS

- political factors
- emotional factors
- social values
- how people use the spaces around them
- what is creating worry, dread or fear
- issues they care about in the grand scheme of things

Along that continuum, there are many factors that influence public opinion about wind energy development – and we know that it’s not just about the facts of the matter.

There are political factors, emotional factors, social values, how people use the spaces around them, what they might be worried about or what issues they care about in the grand scheme of things.
The entire industry has a role to play in undertaking to earn and maintain social license broadly and locally if projects are to move ahead.
This is what success looks like.
Here is a person with influence in a community who has gone beyond acceptance and approval to trusting and identifying with the project.
Earning this level of social license is not easy.
So how do we get there?
At the local level, the onus is on the proponent to consult with the community, but it behooves all industry players to take steps to continually improve and strengthen positive perceptions of the industry.

The reputation and credibility of the industry as a whole will impact the ability of individual projects to earn the community support needed to move ahead.
In this session we are focussing on community needs and making community-level engagement meaningful so I’m going to provide an update on CanWEA’s Best Practices Guide on Community Engagement and Public Consultation before I hand things over to the panel.

In 2010 CanWEA published this guide to help industry members consult and communicate on wind energy developments.

At the time, the guidelines were developed with input from CanWEA member companies, a broad group of experts in communications and public consultation, as well as discussions with municipal leaders.
Supported is Earned

- Citizens are entitled to a meaningful role in developments that affect their community.
- Residents of every community are entitled to ask questions, be skeptical, be concerned, and to oppose a plan.

The underlying principle of the guidelines is that CanWEA and its members recognize the right of citizens to have a meaningful role in developments that affect their community.

This commitment to public and stakeholder engagement means acknowledging that residents of every community have a right to ask questions, be skeptical, be concerned, and oppose a plan.
Helpful Tips

- Involve the local community EARLY in the planning process
- Clearly communicate intentions
- Keep the dialogue opened
- Solicit and incorporate feedback

Meaningful engagement means involving the local community at an early stage in the planning process so that clear intentions are communicated, a dialogue is opened, and feedback is incorporated.
Every Community is Unique

- Seek out and respond to community issues
- TRUE: the onus is on the proponent to inform and consult
- FALSE: it is the community’s responsibility to learn about the project

Meaningful engagement means taking steps to learn about the unique characteristics of the community and seeking out and responding to community issues.

CanWEA’s Best Practices guide includes the acknowledgement that the onus is on the proponent to inform and consult with the community and not that it is the community’s responsibility to learn about the project.
The Guide is filled with general principles, practices and step-by-step instructions aimed at making community engagement meaningful and effective.

While it is not a substitute for the specific and expert advice required in areas such as environmental assessment, Indigenous engagement or regulatory compliance, it is very educational about what the expectations are for meaningful engagement.
As we speak, the Guide is being reviewed.
Later this spring, we’ll be reaching out to members and other stakeholders – perhaps some of you here – for feedback and consultation on the updates.
The new edition will have new content related to digital engagement and social media, which has evolved significantly since 2010.
It will also have a section on Indigenous engagement, recognizing and respecting the legal and constitutional rights of Indigenous peoples.
We hope to release a revised edition in the Fall.
The current edition of the Best Practices Guide is available on the CanWEA website in the Communities menu. I encourage you to have a look.
Now I’m going to turn things over to Greg Lyle and our community engagement panel.

Greg is owner of Innovative Research group.

He’s a pollster and he does a lot of work in things that are relevant to what we are talking about, such as corporate reputation and policy and politics.

He is currently working with CanWEA on research in Alberta that we hope will provide CanWEA with insights into perceptions of wind energy in Alberta and uncover clues about what is driving those perceptions.

We will use that information to guide our work as we strengthen our partnership with communities, First Nations, and landowners across the province.

Each of these panelists are individuals that CanWEA has been collaborating with and we are honoured to have them here.

Please join me in welcoming Greg and our panellists to the stage.
Thank you for your time!

Next up – the panel:

**Moderator: Greg Lyle, Owner, Innovative Research Group**
Al Kemmere, President, Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
Jai Roberts, Renewable Energy Project Manager, First Nations Power Authority
Dan Tocher, VP Stakeholder Relations, Greengate Power Corporation
Binnu Jeyakumar, Program Director – Electricity, Pembina Institute