How are stakeholders involved in pipeline projects?

Over 65 per cent of Canadians have a strong sense of belonging to their community, according to Statistics Canada.* Feeling connected to our communities means we are more likely to participate in local events, help with neighborhood improvements and be aware of changes in our area.

It also means that when we hear about infrastructure projects in our area, like pipeline proposals, we want to be involved in the conversation.

Pipelines are an important part of our energy network – transporting 97 per cent of Canada’s daily natural gas and onshore crude oil production. But the industry also recognizes it’s a privilege to operate within local communities, which is why it’s essential for operators and stakeholders to have honest conversations about pipeline projects.

There are two key ways stakeholders can participate in discussions about pipeline projects – through industry-led consultation and in the energy regulator’s formal hearing process.

**Meaningful conversations**
When operators want to put in a new pipeline or expand an existing one, they gather information about potential needs and opportunities by talking to a variety of stakeholders.

By discussing and sharing information about a project, stakeholders and project proponents gain a better understanding of the specific needs, issues and opportunities a project may generate for individuals or communities.

While pipeline operators may use different ways to communicate with stakeholders, the

* Statistics Canada, Table, Sense of Belonging, 2014 [ht.ly/YJAIyynPC]
Critical conversations

Some of the topics discussed in a regulatory approval process include:

There are numerous ways operators engage with stakeholders – it can be as simple as sending a letter to every community member or holding workshops with specific groups.

Informed decision-making

Regulators expect pipeline operators to consult with stakeholders, which is why pipeline operators develop and implement stakeholder involvement programs to inform the regulatory application and approval process.

When a company applies for a pipeline project to be approved, the regulator can hold a public hearing to get views from Canadians directly affected by the project or who have relevant information that may impact the decision. If the pipeline crosses provincial or international boundaries, the National Energy Board will hold the hearing; otherwise, it’s the provincial regulator.

The regulator’s role is to look at the project benefits, the potential impacts and ultimately decide if the project is in the public’s interest to proceed. This involves reviewing the consultation and studying technical, environmental and economic aspects of the project, which is why those who are affected by the project are invited to participate.

There are two ways Canadians can potentially participate in a NEB hearing:
- File a letter of comment
- Apply for intervenor’s status to provide evidence and ask and respond to questions and motions

The regulator reserves the right to determine who is involved in the public hearing to make sure it stays on topic.

The information provided by participants in the hearing contributes to the regulator’s final decision. If the regulator approves the pipeline project, the operator will then continue to work with stakeholders on the project through the entire life cycle of the pipeline, which includes design and construction, operation and retirement.

This includes ongoing public awareness programs, such as first responder and landowner consultations.

Our hope is that Canadians will exercise their fundamental freedom to be informed and to share their views by asking us the tough questions. But, they should also ask our critics the tough questions too.”

BRENTA KENNY,
PRESIDENT + CEO
CANADIAN ENERGY PIPELINE ASSOCIATION

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