

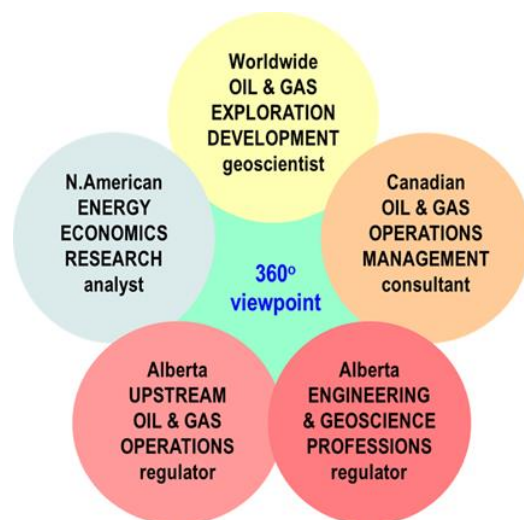
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Professionalism and Ethics in Resource Development in Canada: Cooperation among Regulators and Academia—Missed Opportunities and Needed Changes

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There are obvious conflicts between professional geoscientists' several obligations, given that they need to optimise shareholder value, conduct operations within regulations, and act in the public interest under a professional code of ethics. Commonly, multiple agencies with different regulatory mandates, operating within the same jurisdiction, regulate, govern and influence the work of geoscientists. For resource development in Canada, the primary agencies are government resource regulators (operational), securities commissions (financial), and the geoscience (professional) organisations. As well, the universities play a key role in providing the qualifying education of young professionals. Unfortunately, these entities rarely coordinate or collaborate effectively.



The author's unique 360° viewpoint (the product of a career involvement in several aspects of industry and regulation), provides previously unidentified insights into this issue. Four central conclusions—from observation and analysis—reflect the lack of effective collaboration among the various regulatory entities and academia.

First, and perhaps the most egregious, is an almost complete absence from post-secondary curricula of education on ethics, professionalism, and workplace regulation. Second, is a superficial understanding and widespread lack of commitment on the part of many companies to the fundamental need for (and value to the corporate bottom-line of) good stakeholder and community relations in the local areas where they operate.

Third, and to varying degrees, there is inadequate oversight—inspection, compliance, and enforcement—by the various types of regulators. Finally, while agencies with equivalent mandates cooperate to a nominal degree with their counterparts in other jurisdictions across the country, the different types of regulators—operational, financial, and professional—do not cooperate well even within their home jurisdictions.

While this analysis might seem overly critical, it is set in the context of growing public expectations of all professions—including geoscientists—to know and uphold their societal responsibilities. All four constituents—geoscience professionals, their employers, the regulatory agencies, and academia—need to make changes if they are to improve their own roles and create effective regulatory collaboration.

The Geoscientists themselves must be aware of their regulatory obligations and act ethically at all times: they must act in the public interest as per their code of ethics, while simultaneously respecting the

fiduciary obligations to their shareholders or clients. The various types of regulators should make significant improvements within their own legislative mandates, and cooperate with each other across the broader stage. Federal, provincial, and territorial governments need to facilitate those improvements. Finally, the academic community must embrace ethics, professionalism, and practice oversight (regulation) as an integral part of the geoscience discipline: as engrained as the scientific method, communication skills, and research protocols—something they should undertake in partnership with the all three types of regulators.

All this would ensure that geoscientists fully contribute their skills to a vibrant resources development sector, while fulfilling their professional obligations to Society.

