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## ALBERT POULETTE

**Albert Poulette, Director, Science, Evaluation and Reporting, Alberta Environment** graduated with an Honours Diploma in chemistry from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Edmonton in 1973. He worked for a year as an environmental control analyst for the Iron Ore Company of Canada, Sept Iles, Quebec before joining Alberta Environment in June, 1975 where he spent the remainder of his career. Poulette began work in the Air Quality Branch conducting air source emission surveys and then moved into investigation of air quality complaints at that time largely focused on pulp and paper mill development. When the government established the Pollution Emergency Response Team (PERT), he worked after hours as part of the team responding to all types of environmental calls including emergencies, spills and complaints. In January, 1995 he became the Supervisor Investigations, Pollution Control Division and, in 1998, when Alberta Environment was regionalized, he became Enforcement and Monitoring Manager, Northeast Boreal Region. Poulette subsequently became Regional Compliance Manager responsible for developing monitoring programs and ensuring compliance. Poulette issued a stop work order when Syncrude's new desulphurization fertilizer plant emitted odors affecting nearby communities (c2003-04). In 2008-09 because of his compliance experience, he was seconded to Alberta Health and Wellness for a year to set up a new branch to ensure compliance with standards including continuing care, infection prevention and physician billing. His final posting before retirement was as Director of Science Evaluation and Reporting responsible for the development of a new branch within the new Monitoring and Science Division. In 2004, he graduated from the Senior and Executive Managers Development Program, University of Alberta School of Business.

**Date and place of birth (if available):** December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1953 in Edmonton, Alberta.

**Date and place of interview:** June 17, 2013 at Albert Poulette's home.

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**Name of interviewer:** Adriana A. Davies, CM, Ph D

**Name of videographer:** Jimmy Bustos

**Full names (spelled out) of all others present:** N/A

**Consent form signed:** Yes



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**Initials of Interviewer:** AD

**Last name of subject:** Poulette

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AD: My name is Adriana Davies and I'm the Researcher/Interviewer on the Petroleum History Society Oil Sands Oral History Project. Today is Monday the 17<sup>th</sup> of June and it's about 9:30 a.m. I'm with Albert Poulette in his home; Albert, thanks so much for agreeing to be interviewed.

POULETTE: Oh, it's an honour.

AD: Great. So tell me what your final position was with Alberta Environment, first of all.

POULETTE: I was the Director of Science Evaluation and Reporting for Alberta Environment.

AD: Good. And so can you, as we discussed, can you give me a, sort of a short, potted biography; where and when and the date of your birth, and then your educational background and work background; and then we'll focus in on the material related to oil sands and resources.

POULETTE: Okay, kind of chronology, then: December 3<sup>rd</sup> '53 in Edmonton I was born. I don't know the time exactly but I'm sure it's in a baby book somewhere; my mother must have recorded it; spent most of my life in Edmonton. I got my education at Northern Alberta Institute of Technology in chemistry; studied there in early 70s I guess. From there I took a job in Quebec; went -- 21 year old person -- all by myself; went to Quebec; had a job in a mining company doing some environmental work at the time with a mining company. Did that for a couple years and got a little homesick. Came back to Alberta, started with Alberta Environment in 1975 -- June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1975 so it's almost coming to ...

AD: It's an anniversary.

POULETTE: ... it's almost coming to the anniversary and I started in the air quality section doing air quality monitoring at the time; from there kind of morphed into doing air quality complaints, follow-up on odour complaints and dust complaints, and so I became a complaint investigator. Still needed some monitoring but more, more people skills at that point of trying to figure out what was causing people's problems in the environment and stuff like that. Did that for quite a few years until 1980, January, somewhere in there -- memory is a little foggy on dates -- but we started, I think, all the Pollution Emergency Response Team. It was in January. Up until that point all after-hours emergency response or any, even complaint response or when you'd phone the government at eight o'clock at night it was just being handled by a rotation of professional staff and, you know, they weren't paid; they weren't trained; they, you know, just -- so we took a more aggressive approach to



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after-hours and started the Pollution Emergency Response Team and it was a really big change for the [Department], for us at that time.

So we took a person from each discipline -- from air, water, waste, chemicals, different things like this, and there's five of us, and we started a team of emergency response, and we were officially on after-hours call. In the daytime, you did your regular job; night time you were on a rotation basis but we could call up the whole team if you needed to. We went from -- I'm just kind of guessing at the numbers -- about 400 calls a year at night time, which, you know, not insignificant, to within three years we were up at like 15,000 calls a night, at night time and weekends and stuff like that, so became really a fulltime job. Lots of emergency response and we took a lot of extra training on that kind of thing. So you got out of your personal discipline of -- mine was air quality and had to deal with pipeline spills and all kinds of different emergencies and stuff like that, and put emergency response plans in place and stuff like that.

So that went till, oh, around '88, I think, somewhere in that era, then the department at that time was one of the organizations as a symptom of government -- I think of a need to organize and reorganize and stuff like that -- and they changed it up and it was in line with the coming of EPEA, what's the Environmental Protection Enhancement Act. Before that, it was the Air Quality Act, Water Quality Act, Hazardous Waste Act; each individual, and so as a member of PERT we had authority under the various acts but you still have your primary one that you dealt with. And that's how things were looked at, so when you went to a pipeline break you would take different people. Somebody may be have a look at the air quality aspect; somebody look at the water and the waste; and stuff like that. So EPEA came in and put it all in one omnibus, so then the organization really needed to change to fit with the Act.

And so when that changed they created the Pollution Control Division and PERT then was the nucleus of that, the start of it and it grew from there. So I spent a lot of years at that point in investigations and developed -- we developed the whole investigation program from one investigator to many in the province. I don't know how many there are now, 50 or something like that at least. But, we started Investigation Program; we started Inspections Program; there was [no] formal monitoring at the time so we started to get that structure happening. It's probably the 80s -- early -- to the 90s type of thing. We were, we were then -- we were quite centralized at the time though. There was a major group in Calgary and a major group in Edmonton for pollution control and approval writing, and stuff like that and, uh, at the time -- gosh, I don't even remember which Deputy it was, but it was felt that we needed to be closer to the people and we needed to regionalize more and so that created -- I think it was 1998 [when we created] the regional offices and that I became Regional Manager of the Northeast Boreal. There was six regions at the time and so Northeast Boreal would've been mostly Edmonton area and Fort McMurray oil sands, and stuff like that.

And then, we had another one -- Northwest Boreal, which was Peace River and Grande Prairie, in that area; and then couple down in Red Deer; and a couple down south -- one in Lethbridge, one in Calgary -- type of thing. We tried at that point to try and replicate as much as possible. It was felt



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that that was regionalization so where [in] centralization you had critical mass, you had whatever, 10 or 12 people all with same skill set that you could work together; you could work in teams; you could feed off each other. But then you had to travel places, so when we had to do an investigation in Peace River, well, we had to come from Edmonton and go to Peace River and stuff like that and lots of travelling. You weren't there on a timely basis and stuff like that.

So, regionalized but when you regionalize, well then you lose the critical mass because you just don't have enough people to replicate all the skill sets in all the different areas of the province type of thing. It took a long time to be able to develop those skill sets and those people. You never really get it -- so you're closer to the people, closer to the action, but they don't necessarily have the critical mass that you need. So you have to call, you know, we had to have a brotherhood of different regions and call in help and stuff, and which we did.

From there we went to -- a new ADM came in at the time, a new deputy and a new ADM and he felt that six regions was not appropriate; it was too large -- a direct report to him to; so he changed it around and said we're going to go three regions; we're going to combine the two north, the two central and the two south and going to go one major one, so then you'll have a director and then a -- like -- a compliance manager, which I was, and then you'd have the district compliance managers underneath him, more local. So put in more infrastructure, if you want -- management infrastructure -- and then I became the regional manager, compliance manager for the north. So, basically Edmonton, everything north; so all the oil sands; all the pulp mills; all the coal mines; all the electricity sector. All that would've fell in my purview for inspections, investigations, monitoring, stuff like that.

Stayed that way until, thinking 2008 or something in that range where I took a year of -- not leave, but it was a program in the government to -- Executive Mobility Program -- so that you move staff around, executive managers and senior managers and move them to different departments and stuff that I get different experience and you bring your culture to them and gain a little bit from them. Anyway, I did a year at Alberta Health and Wellness at the time, trying to create a compliance program for Health and Wellness for -- they were bringing in Infection Control Standards and Continuing Care Standards, Doctor Billing.

There was lots of things that they needed a more formalized approach to; so did that for a year and then, when I left that position I moved back to the department into the time the ADM, Ernie Hui asked me if I would take on a challenge of trying to create a more sophisticated monitoring system. We had monitoring pieces all over the place, and they didn't really act as a system, so I wanted to create that, so I started a project called the Integrated Monitoring Evaluation Reporting Framework. So, it took us a couple years to create a framework of which we could build a monitoring system around, and then later that morphed into supporting a panel --the independent panel -- to come up with recommendations, and it's led to the building of a system that's just going to come on board sometime around now.

AD: Yeah, the one regulator, all, all ...



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POULETTE: The regulator one was -- that was on the approval side more than the monitoring side. This one's the monitoring system for the north, for the oil sands. All the controversy that happened around Schindler's report and the government wasn't telling all the truth and weren't monitoring right things and with no credibility industry, and stuff like that. It needed a different system to do that, a different governance system and that's led to the system that they're trying to put in place now with the federal government and provincial government. Ernie's leading that one right now.

AD: So, basically that was the end of your career in, in ...

POULETTE: That was 37 years and I decided that that was probably enough. I'd done a lot of things; I'd just got two new grandchildren; I decided that I would spend more time with them so I decided to retire and spend more time at home and that's what I did.

AD: Excellent. Now, I'm going to backtrack a little because in terms of your different positions that you've held in the ministry, there really almost a bellwether of, of issues that -- that were emerging at different times. So, let's go back to 1975 and, and you said that your area of responsibility and expertise was air monitoring, and so what would you have been doing when you were hired at that point?

POULETTE: At that point, it was along with another gentleman. We were responsible for the source sampling program for the province so, at that time, we had hired a wage staff or summer staff and we'd go out and sample, ourselves, the stacks of Alberta, different ones; obviously different priorities were put in place. People would request -- well, we want you to check this one or that one type of thing -- so it was for the whole province, north and south and we, we'd go out and actually do the source sampling at the various stacks of various industries along the province, and stuff like that.

AD: Can you, can you mention some of the industries and the places, just to get a sense?

POULETTE: Just all, almost every industry that has a stack out there. When you see smoke or something coming out of the top of a stack, we'd have been at that at some point -- and lots of gas plants; all the fertilizer plants; oil sands not so much cause it was just coming into being ...

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: ... at that point, you know, there was some ...

*(Microphone falls off the table);*

AD: Oops.

JM: Let me? No?

POULETTE: Throw it a the pocket I think.



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JB: Can it reach the table? If it can reach the table?

POULETTE: Oh.

AD: Oh, perfect.

JB: Perfect, okay.

POULETTE: Good?

JB: Yeah, yeah.

POULETTE: Still works?

JB: Uh, yeah.

POULETTE: Uh, oil sands a little bit but all -- a lot of asphalt plants too; like a lot of nuisance ones that were, at the time, you know, causing odours or smoke and stuff like that; lots of wood industry at the time. Pulp mills certainly; we did all the pulp mills. So, on the air side of things again, it was very much a media focus department at that time, so that where I knew people in other branches that were doing similar things for water quality, for instance, I didn't really have any interaction on a day-to-day basis, so it was very much looked at in media issues at the time. And air, there were lots of issues in the early 70s with lots of emissions of all kinds of things from -- again, things that we would think, what, you did that then? You just, you just, you know, was just the way it was; that was the science that was there and that was what was allowed, whether it was burning railroad ties or whether it was ground thawing or even smoke and stuff like that from, from facilities.

One of the biggest events that happened -- it happened in Calgary and yet most of our staff was in Edmonton. It was the start-up of a -- the province used to have, I don't know how many there was, probably 10 or 12 major fertilizer companies at the time. Now we only have two or three, they've been kind of amalgamated, but this one was right in Calgary, right in the middle of Calgary in the industrial district down by the Bow River somewhere, or Elbow River, and it started up and the approvals at the time they would've had an air approval and a water approval and stuff. The air approval, for whatever reason, obviously they thought it was appropriate at the time, kind of gave them a hiatus from emissions during start-up saying you didn't need to comply with the amounts coming out or something as long as you were in a start-up mode, recognizing that it was a precarious time when you're starting an industry.

Anyway, it led to a major massive release of sulphur trioxide from the plant. It fogged out most of the city of Calgary; it gridlocked it, basically shut Calgary down. It affected like 300,000 people, and again, that's one of the things that started to change -- saying, "Well, hold it, we can't let that kinds of things happen anymore." So then it started to -- we changed the Act so that you could include limits and it didn't matter whether you're starting up; you had to start up in a responsible manner. They had to change things; then, it was lots of monitoring; lots of investigation; lots of scrutiny



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around the various plants and how they started up; and stuff like that. So it started a whole era on how they did it. And, now, I don't think anybody would even notice if a plant started up. No different from when it was operating from when it's not. But then that was a whole different picture, eh? It was ...

AD: So there was a permissiveness until somebody said – “Whoa, stop.”

POULETTE: Permissiveness because they, I just, nobody believed it was an issue.

AD: Mmhm.

POULETTE: Until it became an issue. And right weather conditions, you know, was kinda the perfect storm kind of thing happens eventually and, thankfully, nobody was really hurt bad out of it type of thing, but it was a major environmental thing and it definitely caused like a total gridlock of the whole emergency system of ambulance and police and fire in Calgary for that day. It was a major event.

AD: So when would this have been roughly?

POULETTE: I'm thinking '78 or so, somewhere in there.

AD: Something like that.

POULETTE: Yeah, I'm thinking in that kind of range, but -- trying to locate myself and which office I was in at the time. I'd been at 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Oxbridge, so yeah, it had to be in that time period type.

AD: Now, you mentioned railroad ties. Do you want to talk about that a bit?

POULETTE: Well, it was another, you know, again, I think if we do this interview with somebody 25 years from now, they will look back and say – “What, you let that happen in 2013? You did that?” Maybe it's with pipelines, maybe it's with -- I don't know what it will be, but it will seem incredible that – “What? You let them do that?” So back then railroad ties was one of the major issues certainly in the 70s and early 80s, even; I think would've been a major issue. I don't know how many miles of railroad tracks are in the province, and they're all with wooden ties, and wooden ties are creosoted and they have to change them out at a somewhat frequent basis as they start to wear down. They have machines that come and pull them out and then they have all these waste ties -- thousands and thousands and thousands of them and there really was no market or they didn't develop a market for them, and the easiest way was burn them; burn them in place. They would burn 10,000 at a time in a stack, and they air quality emissions resulting from that type of activity was, again, incredible.

You know, we'd get around to monitoring that and figuring out what comes off of there and it was just nasty, and so eventually led to better regulation, and you have to -- you can't burn them on site



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and, you know, there was all kinds of rules changed now. They were reused -- I think for landscaping, various things, all kinds of things and none of 'em are burnt. But it took a long time for that and certainly back when it started it was a major issue all over Alberta, and they'd fog in highways by burning these things -- do all kinds of issues you know, because "Well, we're just trying to get rid of our waste," eh? It became a fire hazard also, right? They can't stack these things; the cinders and things come from rails and stuff like that and it became a real issue, eh?

So, another example of air quality. I don't know about permissiveness but certainly at the time it was the way to do things. There was no better technologies and stuff like that, but when I look back at it now, I can't believe, I can't believe we would allow that to happen, and, we didn't eventually; eventually it changed, eh?

AD: Now, the other thing is about ground thawing for construction. Do you want to talk a bit about that?

POULETTE: Well, that was another major air quality issue, certainly in the 70s and 80s. Certainly this province -- at least five months of the year the ground is frozen and so either you do no construction or you have to figure out some way to thaw the ground so that you can appropriately put in pipes and various things like that. So the time, the technology that was available was basically putting a bed of poorer-quality coal and straw mixture and lighting it on fire and letting it smoulder and you'd do that for whatever length of time so that the heat would go down into the ground and thaw it, and then you would be able to use mechanical means to do it. Well, the emissions from this -- smoke and the odour and the nuisance to neighbourhoods -- was incredible; and they did it all over. Edmonton was developing fast; so was Calgary; all, you know, so they, they couldn't afford to shut down for five months and [they needed to] have a way -- there was no really good alternative way at the time, and so that was kind of allowed.

We worked long and hard on that one. We had put together a task force; we looked all over North America about what do you do? Like Alaska, you must have to do these kinds of things, you know, and northern BC, you must have to do those kind of things. Anyway, led to a lot of changes and had to do more [with] mechanical or use more propane and stuff like that, and so now I, you just never see that anywhere. But back then -- I remember a particular incident -- there were many, but they weren't doing -- I'm not sure what they were building at the time but it was on 50<sup>th</sup> street on the south side out by Capilano. It was probably for a couple miles that they had lit it up and it just basically fogged in 50<sup>th</sup> street; you couldn't even drive down 50<sup>th</sup> street for some period of time, and it was all legal at the time. You know, it led to a lot of monitoring and a lot of work to say -- "Well, there's going to be better ways" -- and work with industry and stuff like that on better ways to do that. Eventually, you found better ways and they just don't do that today.

AD: So you started in the monitoring area and you've given some examples of air quality issues that there was no framework for regulating and, and ensuring compliance. But you then made that shift to compliance. When did that happen and how did it happen? You know, what was the legislative atmosphere, the political thinking around that?



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POULETTE: Well, some of the issues I just talked about, whether it was ground thawing or starting up of plants or, or just regular emissions from this or that. The public in the 70s and 80s, and even more so now, [are] becoming much more educated and we're not prepared to just, well, that's just the way it is, I'll put up with it. They would complain about that and they'd complain to the government saying they going to do something about that -- "I can't do this, it's affecting me, affecting my lifestyle." And so that's why the complaint investigator position was really created, the first one anyway, say how can we follow up on more methodical way? How can we train somebody to do that kind of thing; how to gather evidence and, and how to look at it, and how to resolve problems really is what, it was a problem-solving, wasn't so much of an investigative -- well, it took investigative techniques -- but it wasn't for sense of punishment, it was more for the sake of, well, can we fix this? You know, what can we do about it? What's causing those odours or that dust or whatever, and what part can we fix, then that would be transmitted to our approval people, then, we'd start incorporating it in approvals and saying we going to do this or change the legislation or something like that, right?

So that's where it started; so it really started -- soon after, couple years after I started in monitoring and got more into the complaint investigation, and the complaint investigation quickly morphed in 1980s to, well, you can't just investigate air, like I mean lot of times it's, a spill is something that stinks so who's going to go look at it, the spill or the air guy? And wouldn't you just send one guy out to look at it and try to figure out what to do? So it started to create that momentum to look at multimedia and be able to deal with things.

At the time, air quality emergencies, there were many; it was all the well blowouts, like you don't even hear of well blowouts today, I don't think; I don't remember when the last one was but through my career, oh my goodness, it must have been, we must have done at least 20 of them -- the two big Lodgepoles. There was one up in Whitecourt; there were some down south, Claresholm; oh, they were all over the place, so we had to manage B or CB was the main element for that, but the environmental aspect of the air, the water, how and we had a major part in all, doing all those on the air type of thing.

When there happened to be spills, and it was many spills, truck spills, there was -- there seemed to be a truck spill daily in the probably '82, '83, in that range. Literally, daily; they were all over the place. The truckers would overturn, they were asleep [at the wheel]; there wasn't a lot of rules governing how trucks manage themselves. Truck drivers manage themselves -- so they fall asleep, they're equipment wasn't perhaps up to snuff and it's causing problems. Literally it was everything spilled from sulphur and diesel, gasolines, oils, you name it -- there were spills everywhere in the province. It was so bad at the time that, like literally we'd go every day to go -- and we were the major clean-up element -- we didn't do the clean-up -- we insisted on the standards of what had to be cleaned up and when and how you do it and stuff like that.

And then, so again, that leads into a crossover of a pipeline spill for instance, that needs to be burnt because they can't -- no way to clean it up. I remember back then blotting out the sun with black smoke because of burning; well, you just wouldn't allow that kind of activity today, but then it was



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there so you had to have some air quality experience, some spill experience and how you deal with that, so always working with other agencies whether it's the federal government or whether it's the pipeline; National Energy Board had some responsibility across pipelines. Lots of pipeline spills at that time. So today when we hear of one it's, it's a big deal. But then there was lots of pipeline breaks it seemed like.

You know, so a lot of things progress from the 70s and 80s to the way you did things to "Hold it; we're not accepting that kind of thing anymore; you need to do a better job government and industry; you need a better job." Led to more regulation, more oversight, better rules; truckers got all kinds of rules about how far they can drive, how long they can drive, how much they have to do in the equipment. After that you hardly hear of a tanker overturn now.

AD: And so, I mean it's important to have that baseline to understand our attitudes or the public attitudes towards, you know the whole pipeline debate towards what's happening specifically on the ground at Suncor, Syncrude, the others. Now, of course you joined the department just a couple of years after it was established, and it's my understanding that the department was the first Department of the Environment in, in the Commonwealth, the Act, preceded even the federal Act.

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: So do you want to talk a bit about what it was like to be a part of that ministry and to be hired say two years later and to be involved in that?

POULETTE: You know, at the time I don't know if I would've recognized that level, you know, as a job. I was 21 years old, come back from Quebec and come back to Alberta with a good job, it was in the field and, you know, so I would certainly not recognize or recognize it certainly later though the, the impetus of that. You know, so 1971, department was created and the first one ever type of thing, and amalgamation of a few areas type of thing. Mr. [Bill] Yurko was the minister at the time and he stayed on as a minister until just before I started and he's the only minister I haven't worked under other than Mr. -- Miss McQueen [Hon. Diana]—now -- I left before she started, but it was a growing department at that time. Gosh, both in people, like it seemed to be new people starting every second day because they needed to populate the whole department, almost every area type of thing. Certainly at the time, why even wages and stuff like that in the late 70s was -- I remember one year we got a double digit raise twice in one year, just to get the salaries more competitive with industry and stuff like that, and lots of new things happening with all organization, and with rules, and how you looked at things and what you, what you did and stuff like that. As more people came on, you could do more, more activities.

So it was a pretty exciting time, you know; obviously I was pretty junior at the time; I didn't have a lot of influence in making changes that, when you're a newbie within any organization, but, as it went, by 1980 again with the formation of PERT, that was a big step. It was a big change cause then it was kind of rank and file; we were busy every day and we were the ones setting the tone for, well, "We going to do something about this; we can't continue to keep responding and deal with



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these kinds of things,” and so other people would be on priority list of making rule changes or work with the federal government or whatever it would be, eh?

AD: Now, as you know, 1975 to '80 was when the bulk of the environmental and social impact assessment was done for Syncrude, and of course that was the AOSERP program.

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: Alberta Oil Sands Environmental Research Program.

POULETTE: Program.

AD: And what was your awareness of that at the time, if any?

POULETTE: Well, I was aware of it. I didn't have a lot of involvement because it was a separate program. They hired -- like again there, those were the people they were hiring left, right and centre. It seemed like there was new ones starting every week; engineers or technicians, or people like that, plus there was a whole study going on outside of that, not just the department and stuff like that. So it was busy area. A lot of my colleagues of the time would've been -- they were all in our same office and stuff -- would've been with AOSERP, and so I had a peripheral knowledge of it but at the time, again, we weren't very regionalized, it was mostly Edmonton area. They'd done some rural things but Fort McMurray really wasn't -- it was to help differently, if you want, through the AOSERP. GCOS [Great Canadian Oil Sands] was just going; it was, if I remember correctly at the time, it was kinda like ebb and flow whether it was actually even going to be successful or not. Could they actually do this? You know, and then they started the AOSERP and then Syncrude came in and obviously proved to be successful, but I'm not sure it was a sure thing at that time, and stuff -- like it was kind of a trial industry; can, can we make this kind of work?

AD: Yes. And then in terms of the whole issue of monitoring and compliance, it was these other industries that, that you described and construction.

POULETTE: Big focus, big focus in the 70s and 80s. It was all pulp mills. It was at the time they were going to build the one by Lac La Biche -- name escapes me right off the top of my head.

AD: It'll come back.

POULETTE: Yeah, the big one, Alpac.

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: And, but they were all over the place and I recall there were issues with pollutants going into rivers and it was air quality issues with odours. Just had to drive through Hinton or Peace River and you could smell it every day and it was many, many issues with pulp, and with pulp mills probably the big thing before oil sands, if you want, it led to the whole Northern River Basin Study,



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which was a major federal/provincial study for, I'm not sure how long it took, but four or five years about figuring out what, what it is and what the state of the environment is, what the emissions were from pulp mills and stuff like that. So lots of work on pulp mills and it seemed to -- that led to the pulp mill regulations and various things like that, eh.

So then after pulp mills each industry sector seemed to come up to higher than its -- than its brothers, if you want. So electricity industry was one of the other ones that came up, came up a little later, probably about half way through the oil sands kind of industry; the whole electrical generation and coal and stuff like that. Certainly oil sands been on a spotlight for a long time now with -- but the big three were there for a long time before lots else, and there was lots of issues with odours and spills and releases and new technologies developed and, and because of the scale of the oil sands, it was always like a monumental figure to do. It wasn't a \$1.49 fix. Was always multi millions of dollar fix and new technologies that will even work. You know, it was -- so they had to do a lot of stuff like that, but certainly the Suncor, Syncrude and then Albion Sands were the three big ones for a long, long time causing, you know, various issues. They were on a postage stamp part of Alberta and then Fort McMurray and Fort MacKay right, right in that, the thick of things if you want, and cause many issues in the 80s and 90s on air emissions and water and stuff like that -- all kinds of investigative things that needed to happen.

You know, as I went through my career, I don't remember the exact timing of it, but I do remember the first administrative penalty I issued against Syncrude at the time. They hadn't had one; their record for enforcement was good, you know, certainly emissions or they had their own issues but for whatever reason, they had not had an enforcement and environmental manager at the time had sought to influence me to say, "Well, please don't give us this one; we'll do anything but we want to still [keep] our green record." Turned out, you know, it was just the right thing to do. They had done the wrong thing; they needed to have a penalty and I'd issued it at the time as the Manager for that area. But that was a -- I do remember. Then afterwards it led to, you know, there's been quite a few different enforcement actions against Syncrude over the years.

AD: So do you want -- tell me what that was specifically about and what year?

POULETTE: Oh, gee. You know, honest to God I can't -- I remember the gentleman; I remember him in my office and I -- but I -- honest to God, I cannot remember what the first incident -- it was not a big incident -- cause administrative penalties were one of the medium tools or one of the tools available for enforcement that was brought in with APEA saying that, instead of going to the court system and clogging up the court system, when there was -- and it was supposed to be used when there was no disagreement on the facts -- you know, facts were very clear and it was meant as a -- reinforcement of -- "This is not the behaviour we expect; we want you to change your behaviour." And so they were up to \$5,000 a day per offence type of thing, and they [were] issued by a designated director, which I was at the time and it was for the medium offences, if you want. If it truly was offence that needed to go to court, well then we had remedies to do that, or then there was other things like orders or warning letters and stuff like that where [you] want to correct a problem or less severe first time.



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But administrative penalties [were] middle ground and I -- honest to gosh I can't remember what the -- I issued many, many of them over my years so I just don't remember which one would've been for [what] but obviously it would've been for something more minor in nature that we needed to send. And a \$5,000 penalty against a multibillion dollar company doesn't seem -- seems like chump change if you want, I mean to an ordinary Albertan -- and yet it was very serious at the time; it wasn't the \$5000 that was the issue, it was the fact that they have a record and it was enforced with a monetary penalty and their activities were not seen as to be acceptable by the province and, you know, it was that stigma, if you want, that was created, a drive to make changes at Syncrude and, and that's what it was, was all about, eh?

Wasn't about penalizing; like even if I could put a maximum penalty, even if it was a million dollars, put a million dollars to an oil company that makes \$10 million an hour -- be a detriment, a deterrent? I don't know; somebody will have to make that call but I don't think more money would necessarily be a worse penalty.

AD: So in other words, the whole monitoring and then compliance regimes were a collaborative approach was taken -- didn't you say?

POULETTE: I think always. I think I, well, certainly when I was there anyway, it was always looking -- I tried not to present ourselves and my staff as the enemy. I mean, you know, I'm not sure I'd go as far as to say is that -- "we're here to help" you type of thing, I mean it might go a little bit far, but in a lot of ways we were, you know? We would do inspections and we'd find issues with the inspection, and we'd work with the company saying, "You know, as long as it's not a major environmental impact" and stuff like that -- we're not saying you're hurting the environment or something, but you know, you're finding things through inspections that, well, they can do this better and stuff that led to better regulations of something or better equipment or better whatever type of thing. And, if the company was reluctant to do those kinds of things, well then there was orders; we could order the company to do those things.

But even the state -- excuse me -- when we're under an order, still a certain amount of working with. I mean you -- I'm ordering you to come up with a plan and then implement a plan and then I need to work -- you or my staff needs to work with the industry. What does the plan look like? Does it meet the standards of today? Does that seem reasonable? Are we spending a billion dollars to fix a one-cent problem? Or are they proposing to put one cent in to fixing a billion dollar problem, you know? Like I mean there's going to be some middle ground in those kinds of things. What's the best technology of the day? Will it solve the problem? How quickly can it be done and, you know, those kinds of things. So there needs to be a certain amount of working.

We could've been, I suppose, dictatorial in saying, "You got a problem, fix it and tell me when you fix it and we're not involved." I'm not sure that that's in the best interest.

AD: From what you've said, the whole process of environmental regulation involving monitoring and compliance was an incremental process. That today ...



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POULETTE: Oh, yeah.

AD: ... the implication is that there are absolutes. These are the limits to gaseous pollution of various types. Sulphur, for example, or in terms of water, the chlorine bleach used in pulp and paper production at the time, but at that point the ministry was looking at these issues and then determining what were the acceptable limits.

POULETTE: Yeah. We've always used, I don't know exactly where the first time it was coined, but "best of available practical technology." I mean today's technology is way different than 30 years ago, like so if we had today's technology 30 years ago, yeah, we'd a had different environment 30 years ago, but we didn't. You know, whether it was cars or any, anywhere, it's just, you know, the modernization. And so there needs to be the constant work through approvals and regulation on, "Okay, what's the best practical technology?" At the same time it needs some stability, I think, in industry. I mean I've never personally been in that position with industry, but it seems to me that they need some, some assurity for some length of time so that, you know, they can get to the business of producing whatever they're producing and making money type of thing. And so that's why "best practical technology" is only applied, if you want, every ten years or unless there's a problem in between, something's discovered and that's what orders and various things [are for].

We had issued many orders saying "You going to fix this; you going to fix it now; we can't wait till the end of your approval; this is causing a problem now we hadn't anticipated or you hadn't anticipated and so here, fix it." And they would go through the same kind of process of looking for things and figuring out what it would take to fix it and stuff like that. But yeah, I think it's very much incremental, but it's incremental over the whole country; it wasn't just Alberta type of thing. You know, like it wasn't like "Wow, there's a better mousetrap in Quebec or in Iowa" or something like that, cause, if there was, that's that whole search for "best available practical technology" type of thing, eh?

So that was always implemented. The approval side had more business on that. The compliance side, which I come from, was more on -- "Okay, is it working? Is it, are you doing it effectively?" Again, some major court cases in Canada that happened that changed the scale -- not the scale but how we looked at environmental investigations and stuff. It brought in an element -- was a company in Sault Ste. Marie in Ontario type of thing that eventually led to the same thing across the whole pro -- across the whole country -- was a thing called due diligence, which had never been heard of before. Like speeding for instance; it's not a due diligence offence; it's an absolute offence. Speed limit's 50; you do 60 -- I don't really care the reason, the police officer wouldn't really care the reason; it's you're speeding and that's it.

In environmental offences, the courts decided it was very much a public interest thing that, if the company could establish that they were duly diligent, they did everything possible and the occurrence still occurred, they could not be found guilty of, or held responsible for, a -- could be held responsible to fix it, but not in a punitive sense. And so all the investigations and inspections after that were all about diligence, and diligence is about training; it's about equipment; it's about



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inspections; it's about supervision; it's about having the right standards; about having the right procedures. Too many times a company will do a really great job of writing a procedure manual and then they'll put it on a book shelf and nobody will read it, and then three years later an accident happens for whatever reason, and you'll pull out the procedures manual and it says Step A, do this. Well, they didn't do Step A. "Well, why didn't you do that? Well, gosh, I didn't even know that existed." So again, that's not duly diligent, you know. Like you can't just write things and put them on a shelf and active training and stuff like that.

So that changed like all our inspecting and investigative techniques; after that were all looking at not just the act of polluting; did it happen? Why did it happen? What led up to it and what was -- what was that? That always then leads to a certain amount of working with, you going to change your procedures, you going to get them better, you going to write them better, you going to educate them better, you going to -- you can't just tell a guy once and then five years later expect the person to remember that type of activity, so it's ongoing training. You can't have 20 staff and no supervisors and then say well, the staff's fault, he didn't do it right. Well, no, you have a vicarious liability for your staff, you've going to be there.

So investigations took on a much bigger role in not just what happened but why did it happen and could it have been prevented if there were other things that happened? That was a big responsibility, big change and that. And due diligence then leads to more approval changes and stuff like that, if you have to legislate it, if they're not going to do it voluntarily, if you want. Well, then they put in approval or put in regulations saying you must do A, B and C.

AD: Now, which industry was it in Sault Ste. Marie that ...

POULETTE: Oh, God, it was -- it was like a municipal industry, it wasn't even a major ...

AD: Okay.

POULETTE: ... it wasn't even a major thing; it was something about ditch digging or something like that; it was -- and they caused some water flooding or, or something like that. I can't remember the exact thing, but it was not a big major industry.

AD: But it changed the legal framework.

POULETTE: Framework for all of Canada.

AD: And what year would that have been, roughly?

POULETTE: Oh, Sault Ste. Marie would've been in the 80s sometime, I think. There was another one. Bata Shoes is another one; it was the same kind of thing -- was a shoe company with some emissions or something like that. A lot of these cases went all the way to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court makes the law for the land. It has to be adopted into Alberta. So all those things changed the techniques and changed the rules, if you want, on things. Like we had to be much more



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diligent ourselves in investigating why things happened, eh? Today I would argue the investigation of almost any environmental offence is probably a significant portion of it would be on looking at the diligence; what did you do? What led up to, you know, what was all the training, the equipment? Was it the best? You know, you put in a piece of equipment then never, never inspect it for the next three years and it breaks down and causes a major issue. Well, what's the industry standard? How often should that be inspected? Did you inspect it? Did you have the guy right trained to do the inspection? It's a whole litany of things that go with that, eh?

AD: And I think that this is important because, as you know today, the environmental groups and the media are looking at the adequacy or not ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... of, of environmental monitoring programs, regulatory frameworks. I'm going to park that until later because I want to go back to the whole issue of air quality. Now, as you know, in the 80s Suncor and Syncrude did have some fires.

POULETTE: Oh, yes.

AD: So did you have any dealings with that?

POULETTE: Yes, those were ...

AD: Can you talk about that?

POULETTE: Those would be -- I didn't personally investigate those ones because I would have been in a management position at the time, but my staff would've investigated those ones. It's one of the later fires [that] would cause -- and again, it was the whole, "What led up to that?" Why and how and equipment testing and stuff like that. I don't remember specific details of that like, you know, my memory on some of the cases is just fresh like today and some of them is -- okay, we did hundreds; we did thousands of investigations.

AD: I don't think there were any deaths in the one that caused the shutdown for ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... for five or six months, so then maybe that wouldn't have been a trigger.

POULETTE: But a death wouldn't, you know, whether it's very sad or very, very serious; that also invited involvement from Occupational Health and Safety investigators in dealing with the fatality. You know, so like various government agencies had to stay within their field of expertise, so we would've looked at not what caused a fatality but what caused the emissions to cause [the fatality]. So if there was no emissions -- let's say it was a fire and a piece of metal blew out and, unfortunately,



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killed somebody, but there really wasn't emissions from it, then my staff probably would not have been involved that much.

AD: Well, with this one they were spraying kerosene on ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... um, the conveyors to stop the bitumen from sticking, and of course ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... it had built up along one side of, of the extraction ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... plant and then, of course, it ignited and burnt, went through all of the electrical systems and, and all of that. So it was, it was a big deal, was huge.

POULETTE: It was huge but I'm not sure it was huge on an environmental scale.

AD: Okay.

POULETTE: Okay, you had a fire; you have a fire; you'd have black smoke and you got creosote and then you put the fire out and -- okay, yes, there's emissions and stuff like that, but there's a lot worse things than that; and so it caused a lot of damage, caused a lot of shutdown, lot of problems, but it would not scope that in as a major environmental release.

AD: Okay.

POULETTE: You know, there was others that, if you were dealing with different chemicals that perhaps didn't burn or something like a company like a Dow Chemical releasing chlorine and stuff like that, or the waste management company in Swan Hills when they had the PCB release -- [that] was major environmental.

AD: Okay.

POULETTE: Not as big an accidental or industrial accident, but major environmental at the time; so those are the ones that have got major involvement with monitoring and all kinds of things like that; trying to figure out and why did it happen. I had personally investigated the Swan Hills one and that was a massive release, you know, of PCBs and that was another classic -- read the manual and put the manual away and then do things and that caused -- a small thing caused a major problem and major release, eh? The one major release from Swan Hills at the time was caused by a poor weld. They got a welder in and they -- he wasn't really trained to do the one type of metal to another type of metal, so it takes a certain, you know, welding -- always thought just we weld things,



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but there's a lot of science to welding, there truly is, and in this case they didn't do it. And eventually it broke and it caused all these emissions of PCBs to go to the atmosphere. At the time the company was Bovar and they were taking in PCBs from all over the country and destroying it at this flagship plant. Well, that led to major, major environmental emissions and major problems with First Nations and contamination and stuff, but so, again, big major environmental event.

With the Suncor fire, it was a serious thing, but really didn't have a big environmental, didn't break environmental rules; it didn't; they didn't. It was like no emission limits set for a fire; how can you possibly do that? So, it's a different type of approach. There's bigger incidents that happened at Syncrude and Suncor that didn't -- that weren't the result of an accident or a fire type of thing.

AD: Well, can you give me some examples of those?

POULETTE: They have a -- Syncrude for instance, they would -- well, I'll give you one that was causing -- they spent I think \$50 million fixing it. Their tank farm, for instance. In wintertime their tank farms -- all these big tanks like 2 million liters in each tank -- and they go up and down as they fill them up with oil or condensate or whatever the various products they put in them. When they, - - when you start filling something, just like anything else, the air's got to go somewhere; the air's contaminated; then it goes out a vent out the side. Okay, well, the vents that they had didn't work in the wintertime. They just didn't; they'd freeze up and then they would, you know, you cause a collapse of the whole tank and cause a major problem. So they either took them out or disabled them or whatever, so every time they filled a tank, emissions come out the side. It was unliveable in Fort MacKay, you know, which was a significant distance away but you're putting out a lot and you're filling tanks every day. Every day some was filling or emptying.

So the whole investigation of doing that led to them designing and implementing new vents for the side of their tanks that would be capable of stopping the odours from coming out and stuff like that, and still not causing integrity problems with the tanks. That was a major, a major release type of thing; that was an order that believe they spent like \$50 million changing the technology just to fix the tanks.

AD: Did you actually issue a stop-work order or not?

POULETTE: The department really never -- it had the authority but it was never usually a stop-work order; it was usually an enforcement order or environment protection order saying -- "You broke the law; fix it." There it is -- "Or you're causing an environmental problem; fix it and tell me how you're going to do it, and here's the certain date I want a plan." There's all kinds of checks and stuff. So that was one. There was another major one at Syncrude that did lead to a stop order, not of the whole plant but of that particular process when they were putting in the fluid gas desulfurizer -- FDG -- which is a good thing. It truly was; it was the sulphur emissions, the sulphur dioxide emissions, they were going to reduce them from -- I'm paraphrasing but like 200 tons an hour down to 50 tons an hour, so a significant, significant reduction in sulphur dioxide going out the stack with this major piece of equipment that basically took a waste stream of ammonia that they have at the



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plant, mixed it with the waste stream coming from the coker so it had all the sulphur dioxide in it. I'm oversimplifying it, but they mix together; they would create ammonium sulphate, which was a fertilizer. They would take the fertilizer out and sell it as ammonium fertilizer, sulphate fertilizer, reduce the emissions going out the stack and everything was good. That's the way it was on paper.

Until the plant started and, when the plant started, we started noticing severe odours; not visible but odours, and people described it as cat urine; but ammonia kind of related but not, you know, not like you'd take a jug of ammonia and smell it -- people would know that -- but it was unknown and it started affecting MacKay, Fort MacKay. It got so bad one day that they felt that it was some emissions, and they shut the school down, evacuated and stuff like that. It -- the wind -- shifted obviously to go to Fort McMurray in a couple days, so not sure exactly how long I had let it operate. The plant manager at the time said that he needed some opportunity to tune "the car" and the car needs to be running if you want. And I said that I would not allow it to go very long because it was causing problems.

Eventually, I did issue an order and shut down the plant, that particular part of the plant, which eventually shut down the whole plant production-wise. That led to -- I can't even calculate how much money -- but it shut down for over a year while they redesigned. Then, they had to bring in fresh ammonia rather than contaminated ammonia and all kinds of issues happened as a result. It cost the company, I'm sure, hundreds of millions of dollars in lost production and extra amount of money.

And, again, you talked about a working relationship and that. I prided myself -- and I think all compliance managers at the time tried to get a working relationship with the various industries to be able to say, "I'm positive individuals are not trying to hurt the environment either." I mean people are basically good. We have to presume that and they have families in McMurray; they're obviously not trying to poison their own families in McMurray. So you work; you get a relationship and you -- at that time I did make a phone call and said "You really need to shut down. I will follow up with paper, official legislated paper there, but you need to shut down; you need to shut down now." And there was no argument; absolutely.

And that happened a couple times throughout my career. It happened in Fort Saskatchewan to a particular company. Again, it was a mis-design issue; started up with, again, another plant that was designed to take a waste stream from a different plant and it -- their limit -- again, I can't remember the exact numbers and stuff like that, but it was like say .1 units per hour. When they started it, it was at 10 units per hour -- [this] was the emissions and they couldn't figure out, well, what? Now, in this particular case, it was definitely ethylene oxide, which really wasn't a major environmental problem, even at 10. But their limit, the "speed" limit was .1 and they agreed to that speed limit. That's where the technology should have been able to achieve. Other plants were achieving the same. They just miscalculated engineering-wise, and, again, talk to the plant manager; you've got to shut down; you can't keep putting out emissions like that; and they did. It took them over a year to redesign and refix and eventually it came within the standards.



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So those were the type of major environmental things that are not necessarily major things that like you'd see, like a major explosion, or something like. Most major environmental incidents don't have those attached to them. They're more subtle. But they do cause serious environmental problems and then ...

AD: So, throughout the 80s then, would it be fair to say that certainly Syncrude was starting up and of course Suncor was in its second generation ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... that there were incidents but they were dealt with in a kind of collegial fashion and the companies then did their best to comply and to change processes to make them ...

POULETTE: I'm not sure I'd go as far as it was collegial type of thing. There was a lot of finger pointing, I'll say.

AD: Okay.

POULETTE: They're so close to each other and then Fort McMurray is down [river], so a few were experiencing some odours or some emissions or some fallout or whatever you would experience in McMurray. It's not easy to decide or determine who is at fault or was there one of them at fault and what was causing it? It's not like saying you have a little footprint and you go find the problem, "Oh, it's valve A; fix that." It's much more complicated than that and so at the time, even into 2000s, I think, there wasn't a lot of stewardship between companies; it was I'm Suncor and I'm Syncrude. They're my competitor and we're not -- we don't necessarily see eye to eye; we both work with the government, but we'll not necessarily work together so much, and, "Oh, there's a problem? Well, it must be my neighbours causing the problem; I would never do that kind of activity." Then, you know, a lot of that type of activity happened, so I'm not sure it was collegial. Took a lot of work to -- and a lot of monitoring, a lot of investigations and, oh, God, there's many orders issued to both companies -- you've got to find what the problem is here, you know? You've got, whatever, hundreds of acres and something is causing this odour; either it's a combination of things or whatever.

Suncor, I remember -- God, we went through two to three varieties of issues and reports and stuff like that and trying to figure out, "Well, what's causing the problem and stuff like ...."

AD: Can you give a, cite a specific example or two?

POULETTE: Well, the Suncor one; the problem was, again, they were getting ambient readings at the monitoring stations above the ambient guideline so it's not a rule, it's not like a speed limit, but it's a guideline saying you've got to keep your emissions in the ambient world, if you want, below these things. So, a couple of the stations were having significant readings. I don't remember the numbers but, you know, definitely hundreds and thousands of different readings over the limits over the years and till, eventually -- well, and then nobody could pinpoint well, where is it coming from?



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So, again, I had issued order to Suncor saying you've got to do a study. You've got to look at all aspects of your plant and investigate the various things and put in a priority system of how you fix things and stuff like that and they went through -- oh, that was just before the main fire happened -- that too, it ...

But to look at the tailings ponds and how is the stuff put into the tailings ponds? Is it coming off the tailings ponds? Is it coming from the mine area? Is it coming from here? And stuff like that, so then they did various things and so it led to improvements in all; you know, it was never going to find that silver bullet, if you want -- oh, it's that one thing? And we'll just put the, the thingamajig in there and we'll fix it. It was never going to be that simple, you know, not with a complicated plant like that. But slowly they worked at it. I don't know the state of it today -- haven't been involved in a long time -- but when I left, the order was still in effect; they were still looking at things; they were still having some issues. It was a lot of the tailings ponds and how much material goes out to the tailings ponds and stuff like that. Can you reduce it?

You know, again, the thing that always amazed me with the Suncor's and the Syncrude's was the magnitude of the issues. So when you're talking emissions going to the tailings ponds where a company like Petro-Can in Edmonton or Suncor now, they're might be -- I don't know -- hundreds of litres or something like that going out to their ponds an hour. You're talking about tens of thousands of litres a minute going out to the tailings ponds. The magnitude of it is -- and even if it was only one percent diluent in it, wow, that's a lot of stuff and that goes into the pond and then there's nothing keeping it on the pond. It actually volatilizes off and causes odours. I don't know if you've ever smelt diluent but, if you have, = it's a very stinky kerosene-y -- it's the material they use to dilute the oil sands so they can make it move. But it's very, very odorous.

I remember an incident happened in Edmonton by, again, you know, government is as bad as anybody else with not following procedures. It was at our lab -- there was a bottle of diluent that was 99 percent water and a little skiff in a little sample bottle on the top and somebody thought, well, it'd be okay; just dump it down the drain. It smelled the entire lab out for like days that you couldn't even breathe in the lab just from that little bit of diluent. So, it's quite odorous and so the magnitude of the stuff going out to the ponds; well, how can you fix that? So what's the technology and how can you do that and, you know, so that's when I would've worked with my buddy, Kem Singh, who was the Approval Manager at the time, saying, "Well, come on, what is the best practical technology? Can we reduce that?" Energy Resources Conservation Board was also involved saying "Well, every drop of diluent you put out to the ponds is wasted energy. So how can you do a better job with that?" So, lots of pressure on the Syncrude's and Suncor's to do better jobs in managing that, not just from environmental, from energy standpoint. So that was one of the orders that definitely changed the way Suncor did its job.

Syncrude, I had a similar one; it was more with water though. It was -- had a mixing pond or a kind of in-between [stage] before it goes out to their tailings ponds; it went into -- I can't remember the name of the particular pond. Again, there was lots of hydrogen sulphide monitors in the air that were going off and stuff, like why? What's going in there and what's it coming from and how can



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you prevent that? So, again, that led to a whole study of what are all the streams going in there? What are you doing about each one of those streams? How do you prevent that cocktail mix, if you want, in the soup before it gets there. So, again, Syncrude had to do quite a bit of work on that.

Those ones, again, are orders more about – “Here, we found a problem; you got to fix that.” I suppose they would have broken some environmental rule sometime and maybe you could have done something more punitive, but would that really fix it, eh? So, it was more of here’s an order and tell me how you’re going to work on that and we’ll agree then to that plan and then you’ll execute that plan.

AD: Now, the whole issue of regionalization; certainly it was a political decision; it was around a range of issues. A part of it was a desire to, to make government smaller, but then also ostensibly the decentralization was about getting the inspectors or whoever out there in the region. Can you talk a bit about your experience? What your title was, what your responsibilities were and, and what year did you take on those responsibilities?

POULETTE: So, the first regionalization, again, was in ’98 and I was a District Compliance Manager and, then, soon after that in 2000 or 2001 I went to a Regional Compliance Manager. So, just a larger area, so they’re both more-or-less the same. Again, when regionalization -- regionalization happened in Alberta Environment, it’s not like we didn’t have people in various regions. There was always some inspectors, whether municipal inspectors or that; it was not as methodical perhaps as it should be, and it wasn’t a lot of decision making in the regions. It, you know, was eyes and ears and stuff like that, but a lot of regionalized focus; and, so, the coin phrase at the time is “Do business where the people are”; truly. And not really heard of it as a down-sizing exercise because it really wasn’t.

They actually had more people afterwards because just two people in one area and you had to split to three regions; well, okay. How you going to do that? You had to hire another person at least, right? So, it really wasn’t downsizing; it was the main -- do business where the people are. That was from municipal government-wise; that was MLA-wise. Pay more attention to the MLAs in your particular district, so rather than one person having -- I don’t know how many MLAs there are, but whatever hundred MLAs responsible; talking to one person like the Director of Air Quality if you want. Would it make more sense in a small region -- you’d have, whatever, 10 or 12 MLAs -- what are your issues and how can we help support those issues? Municipal government says the same thing, you know, that another layer of government, some responsibility for environmental issues, so how can we help out with those kinds of things?

Just ordinary citizen in Alberta -- you know, we have people closer to them; we could get to them quicker; pay more attention to them; and stuff like that, eh? And, so, you weren’t overly consumed; so each region had its own separate issues; so the major issues of the Syncrude’s and the Suncor’s -- the major environmental problems -- seemed to make some water issue, water rights issue in southern Alberta. If I’m having to deal with both of those in Edmonton, well which one’s going get my attention? But when we had regional people, the water rights people, there was a major issue in



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southern Alberta, and they dealt with it in southern Alberta but notwithstanding other people were dealing with Syncrude and Suncor.

So, it did that. It focused on local issues that -- and local problems and local concerns. Which is good and it really was a good thing. Unfortunately -- well, I don't know about unfortunate, that's a poor choice of words -- but regionalization also has its challenges -- how do you duplicate the expertise and the people and stuff like that? Experiences in all -- how to populate that in each one area? How do you keep experienced staff in some of the bedroom communities of Alberta, type of thing, that perhaps a person in a coming career with a profession -- they want to be more in the action-centre of Edmonton or Calgary. Difficult to keep and hire professional staff in various regions and stuff like that, and decision-makers -- how do you get the quality decision-makers?

You know, people have a tendency, or certainly in the environmental field anyway -- "I've done my dues of five years in Fort McMurray, I want to go somewhere else now," so then you're constantly turning over experienced staff, inexperienced, so it's a constant struggle in the regional aspect to keep that thing and to keep enough critical mass that you can deal with things -- forced us to work with other regions. Not, well, forced, you just had to because, you know, you had to have more critical mass.

And then decision making becomes -- when you put it out, the huge challenge to get consistency on decision making. Certainly, on approvals there was a whole approvals team that would meet, of managers, and standards and if you're doing this in this region, we have to do this in this region, you know, otherwise, a company like Shell that has a plant over here and a plant over here, they felt they were being treated differently because there were different staff now. And there was. And compliance is the same thing, right? So, what I do in one region, I better do the same kind of [thing] procedural-wise and stuff at another region. So, if I'm going to give an enforcement action in one region, a similar set of facts should lead to an enforcement in another region.

Well, it's difficult to do that when you regionalize, and keep that in mind; so that's another challenge, a huge challenge in consistency in regionalization and, you know, it's one that I think we, we did meet. Obviously, we had monthly meetings, the compliance managers, and we set up procedural things and certain things that you can do to ensure that consistency. Every enforcement action was, went to a committee of the compliance manager, if you want, not to necessarily change the decision or make the decision, but to get that consistency. So, here's a set of facts and I'm thinking about doing this with this company, and get the input from the other manager saying, "Oh, really, would you do that? I had one of those last year and I did this." And that - and it's an input to create that consistency.

AD: So, at the management level you compensated for not having a centralized team with those responsibilities. Now, here we are, you've regionalized and you mentioned Kem Singh and who's in charge of approvals; you're in charge of the whole compliance side of it, which includes monitoring and ...



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POULETTE: Inspections and investigations.

AD: ... and investigations. And here we've got the boom. We've got projects developing everywhere; different companies ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... expansions of existing plants. So what was it like to, to deal with that?

POULETTE: You know, it was a, well, exciting time and it probably still is, but that forced us, again, to go to our counterparts in the other regions saying, "You guys have got to help out." We got -- I created a multiregional team of investigators that reported to me during those investigation files, if you want, and I took some from each one of the other districts to focus on some of the issues that were happening in McMurray at the time. Suncor Firebag was one of the major ones; Suncor odour issue was another one at the time; Syncrude, there was a water release I think at the time; there was the duck issue, the dead ducks that were happening at that time; oh, gosh, there was like 13 major files happening and Fort McMurray had two investigators.

Well, it's not possible to be able to do all those things; plus you still had to pay attention to the smaller things. I mean, you can't just, you know, when an ordinary citizen said, "Well, it smells in my house," or "My neighbour's causing this problem," or, you know, something more minor localized issue, can't say, "Well, sorry, I'm dealing with Suncor and Syncrude; you're not important, you know." They are important, you know. So even those two staff then had to dilute their activities to other things and stuff, so we had to have other staff come.

Approvals, I think, did more or less the same kind of things -- type of thing. All of a sudden -- a Syncrude approval, it takes a year to review and negotiate and figure out what's the best practical technology and the company will submit plans saying we want to put in a "flue-flue" valve; well, I've got to do all the investigation on it. Is that the right thing to do? Is it not? And you, know, it's not a simple matter of doing that. So, it takes a lot of focus and takes away from actual plants and stuff.

Went through a lot of regulation change, too; we changed a lot of regulations; we went to more codes of practice so it didn't take an approval person to review that. You can put a general set of rules in place, saying, asphalt plants and smaller ones that sometimes cause localized problems, here's the rules type of thing, and just do it individual. Gravel plants, pits were the same thing. So that helped out on the approval side, somewhat, I think -- focus, but again, they had to work with their counterparts and it's just the way it is and that, I think, is symptom of -- I don't know -- I'm pretty sure it probably happens at any regionalized organization at time to time; you've got to work in Region 1 or you've got to work in Region 2 or you've got to help out and stuff like that, eh? So we did a lot of that.

Again, there's probably a hybrid, and I'm not sure exactly where and, you know, maybe they're finding it today of "regionalized versus centralized." Can't be all centralized; we figured that out; that doesn't really work, and all regionalized it has some huge challenges associated with capacity



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and all kinds of things -- be it staffing and stuff like that -- so there must be some happy medium in between that, that would strike towards -- especially with professional staff that work better, I think, when they have some critical mass and they have -- be able to feed ideas off of each other, that you can do that from region to region but it's not as easy as you're sitting next door to Bob; you're more likely to interact with Bob than if Bob's in Calgary [and] you'd pick up the phone and talk to Bob and, it's just human nature I think; you'll interact better with him beside you on a professional standpoint and work on issues.

AD: Now, what about the question that the government, you know, was aware because they were approving all of these projects and why did they not ramp up the whole compliance side?

POULETTE: Okay, they were aware; they approved all the projects but they certainly weren't aware that they would necessarily have all those issues associated with it at the time and went years without having issues and all of a sudden had a bunch of issues. So I, you know, the answer to me would be like, "Oh, you have to have enough staff but you don't want to have staff sitting around doing nothing either." Like, if I had 50 investigators up there, they'd certainly be able to deal with all those incidents, but they'd be tripping over each other and, you know, so what's the right number? I don't know; people asked me over the years, could you use more staff? I think any manager that said "Oh, absolutely not, don't send me any more staff." I don't think that would ever happen.

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: So you could always use more staff? Do you have enough staff; absolutely. You do what you do and you do what you can, and you prioritize and the important thing is get things done first. I mean that's part of the job of the manager, right? So, I'd always argue I had enough staff, but if you want to send me more, absolutely, I can deal with more.

AD: Well, because I'm thinking of, you know, that then you have David Schindler and others who are, take on certain monitoring issues ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... and then fault the government of Alberta. I mean do you want to address that in some fashion and ...

POULETTE: Okay.

AD: ... be specific as ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... be as specific as possible.



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POULETTE: I think you have to start from what's the impetus for the monitoring in the first place, and what gets it done, and what's the mental thinking behind it, and stuff like that. So the government is about monitoring the big picture, if you want, and ensuring that industry is monitoring the right things. Tell them to monitor water and "This here's your limits and tell me what you're going to do." With not a lot of research -- like do we know things or not know things? Where Schindler or a researcher -- a Masters or PhD -- when they're doing their projects they're all about looking for a different problem and trying to find a solution to it or an answer to it. Is that a problem? They put a hypothesis forward and go to try to prove or disprove that hypothesis.

The government is not in that game usually; they don't play that way' it's more about "Here's the standards and everybody go," and stuff like that. So they're coming from two different angles; so when one finds something that the other one didn't, oh, it should not be a huge surprise. They both come at it at a different way -- it's how you react when you found it, and I think the government maybe could've done a better job at that at that point of saying, "Oh, wow, you found that? Cool, we'll go out to look at that too; you know, good job!" But it wasn't, it was "Nah, I don't believe you," and, you know, and "How did you do it? You probably used faulty this," or whatever the arguments were. And, so, perhaps embracing that would've been a better way; you know, hindsight's always better at that, and eventually that's what it did do. Lot of the things that Mr. Schindler said, well, we should look at this, we should look at this and eventually that's what they wound up looking at, which changed the way we did things.

But in [focusing] about compliance -- are you breaking the rules and stuff like that; where monitoring today has morphed into more affects monitoring "quality." Now, it's not the right word -- it's what is the condition in the environment out there? Not so much, "Where is it coming from." There's different parts of monitoring and different elements that can get you at that. It's "I have this lump of companies here; what's the state of the environment around that? Is it going up? Is it getting better? Is it getting worse? Is it meeting the standards of the day?" Is it -- that's what environmental monitoring's about in Fort McMurray. That's where the new system is going -- is saying -- we have to be able to take enough samples [in] enough places with enough differences in them to try and find these issues. Like naphthalic acids is a big topic, subject up in Fort McMurray. Well, it's not even a regulated substance; they don't know enough about it but they know it's not good in the environment, type of thing.

And, so, even monitoring techniques had to be developed to try and do that kind of stuff. Well, the government is not really designed to do those kinds of things, and that's why an arm's length agency seems to make a little bit more sense. The government is about rules and regulations and plants and follow [through]-- are you doing the right things?

AD: So, in other words, you know, we've see environmental regulations evolving incrementally. We've seen them initially from the silos of air, water, land, then, the big breakthrough was an act that actually integrated all of them and an integrated approach to both approvals and monitoring/compliance. So, in your opinion, government was doing what it was supposed to do in these various instances in dealing with the companies.



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POULETTE: Given the knowledge of the time, the technology, I agree, yeah, a hundred percent. You know, how we deal with things, like the stewardship aspect of working together, like some of the work that's being done on tailings ponds today and stuff like this, collaboration of companies. That would've been unheard of in the eighties. It just, it just didn't happen -- this is my competitor, you know, like why would I give him an edge? I found a better mousetrap, whoo hoo! I'm not telling that, you know, type of thing. We're much different today; much different today. It's about "cumulative effects" and regardless what the industry, so if you have a -- if you're an industry and you're causing a problem and you're my neighbour, it's a problem for me too. But that wasn't a recognition -- I don't think -- back in seventies and eighties. And so the government's role at this point is to get them working and get them going [in] the right directions and set the standards and here's, here's the policy of the days and all those types of things. I really think that that is the role of government.

Monitoring is no different. You know, monitoring -- the changes in technology from 1970s in air quality monitoring -- I remember the first well blowout I went to; there wasn't even any portable equipment to be able to monitor hydrogen sulphide. We had these, oh, I don't even know what the name of them is now it's so long ago. It was a lead acetate tape that -- it was in a machine and put the air through the machine and then the lead acetate tape would turn dark because the hydrogen sulphide would react with it, and then you'd read the density, and that's how much. But you had to let it run there, through there like 24 hours and you tell me how that would be okay in an emergency situation; how much hydrogen sulphide is in the air? Oh, I don't know! You know, where today, much more sophisticated [equipment] -- we've got monitoring buses; we got gas chromatographs; you got all kinds of ...

AD: Yes.

POULETTE: ... sophisticated equipment to get out there and both stationary and mobile. That's the air; water's the same way, they're all the same way. Could we, could Dr. Schindler have done his study 25 years ago and found the answers that he found? No, absolutely not. You know, there wasn't the laboratory technique; there wasn't the sampling technique. Some of the compounds -- really, was that a problem? You know, there wouldn't even -- so it's just the evolution of things as they go; everything in its time and space and, as you develop things, so again, having an agency more focused on it, it can only be a good thing. That's their focus -- that's their single focus -- is to come up with better techniques, come up with better ways, come up with better ways to use all the resources that are available and stuff like that, rather than competing resources. "I'm the air monitoring guy; you're the water monitoring guy; and there's only a buck in the monitoring budget." We're both fighting over the same dollar type of thing.

Well, you'll have a little bit of that, I think, in the agency, but not as much. It's all under one window and what's the priority and how does this effect it. Much more thought of how the air quality is affecting the water quality. Not just how the air quality is affecting the trees and stuff like that; is it having impact on the water quality? So, you're having deposition on the water and then the problem ....



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AD: Snow, which is the ...

POULETTE: Snow, the same thing, runs in ...

AD: ... latest thing from Schindler.

POULETTE: ... that's what ...

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: That's the Schindler issue, right?

AD: Yeah. Yeah.

POULETTE: It's saying -- hold it, hold it, we got -- it's not a -- it ultimately becomes a water issue but it's an air issue, you know, and how do you do that? What's the synergies between those and stuff like that? So lots more work is being done on that and so, I, you know, overall it's all a good thing. We, at the end, we're going to have a better monitoring system that's there and we'll always have the Dr. Schindler's of the world, if you want, looking at different angles and things and stuff; we'll find different things.

AD: And so that they can serve as a catalyst to change.

POULETTE: I agree; I think so. I think we just need to embrace it, not ...

AD: Question it.

POULETTE: Yeah, question it, like yeah, you know, you got some other political motivation, blah blah blah, whatever, whatever it is, you know. It's like it should've been embraced and being able to say here's another input. Wow, that's a cool input and ...

AD: What can we do with ....

POULETTE: ... we, yeah, we're that much smarter today because of that and how do we change, how do we embrace that?

AD: Yeah. Now, in terms of working with the local community, you know, you've done that. Can you give me some instances going back ....

POULETTE: Oh.

AD: ... with the span of your career?

POULETTE: Goodness. Goodness. Local municipalities; I'll give you City of Edmonton because it's a good example, and it's a large one, but they're in a dual role. They have a responsibility to the



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citizens for environmental issues and stuff like that, and governing and stuff, but they're also a regulated group. They operate sewage treatment plants; they operate water pipelines; they extract water from the river or whatever, from things -- those are all things that are approved by the department. You know, so it's a dual responsibility we have with them, so, one, we have to treat them at some point, just like any other industry. You have an approval; you've got to comply with your approval conditions, and you do that.

But, on the same person, we need to also a lot of times be working with them saying "Well, how come we have collaborative approach at different levels of government to perhaps idling of cars or, or emissions and stuff like that are not specifically, they're, not in control of it, they're not -- like the sewage treatment plant, they're very much in control of it. They operate it; they have to have their trained operators; they have to show their due diligence. You know, back in the seventies there was lots of odour issues with Gold Bar Sewage Treatment Plant and there was lots of emissions from combined sewer overflows. They're still dealing with those issues today, but that, again, that's dealing with them as a regulator.

But other environmental issues that happen in the province, I remember a very collaborative approach. We were having some serious issues in that creek that flows into the river ...

AD: Mill Creek?

POULETTE: Mill Creek. Mill Creek kept showing up oil and stuff on the creek and it was obviously through the storm sewers it was getting in, and city has responsibility for storm sewers but obviously they're not -- they can't control them all. There's thousands of inputs into them. So we, we did the first inspection sweep; we called it Clean Sweep. We took an area of the city that fed all that sewer system and we went and inspected every business. Every single business got an inspection by teams of municipal inspectors, environment inspectors; we even used some SRD inspectors, the city police were involved. We found all kinds of things. It led to, I don't know, 13 or 14 major enforcement files from Alberta Environment -- people storing waste, dumping waste and stuff.

It led to things like chop shops we found that the police investigated. We had found through our inspections a theft ring kind of thing that were using one of the warehouses as storage. So, it was a really big collaboration and it was a really big -- took a lot of effort, a lot of coordination.

AD: Leg work, very labour intensive.

POULETTE: We hit every -- I think there was 900 and some businesses and it took us seven days to hit every one of them and, and inspect it and, and be able to look at it from both bylaws and cause there was certain bylaws we were looking at -- waste disposal, the environmental laws we were looking at. Obviously criminal offences I would -- just obviously we see something, well, I don't know about that, I don't, I don't know anything about chop shops personally, but maybe you want to look at it, the police ...



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AD: Yeah, the police ...

POULETTE: ... department and ...

AD: ... yeah.

POULETTE: ... stuff like that, you know.

AD: Now, in terms of the oil sands region, there is a regional monitoring entity. Do you want to talk about that and your relationship with them?

POULETTE: Well, there's a couple.

AD: Okay. Talk about -- oops. I just dropped my mike. Carry on.

POULETTE: Okay. So throughout the province they created -- they, us -- not exactly sure of the formation of air sheds. Air sheds were designed to look and handle the monitoring -- air monitoring -- in more collaborative fashion. So these were set up -- they weren't set up in every part of the province but we encouraged it as the government. I remember promoting it in the Calgary one when it hadn't had one, but there's one up in Peace; there's one in the Central in Edmonton -- I worked with that one a lot -- but there was one in Fort McMurray -- WBEA, Wood Buffalo Environmental Association -- and it was responsible initially for air monitoring and stuff, and there's quite a few air monitoring stations. They had their own board and it ran through the CASA [Clean Air Strategic Alliance]; it was endorsed by CASA, like so each -- to become an official air shed you had to have an endorsement by CASA and that meant you had to be collaborative and -- set, a certain set of rules had to operate under, and they operated for years all the air monitoring and stuff like that, but I think reasonably well to the extent it was. It was difficult to get every air shed -- every inch of the province -- covered in air sheds because some places just didn't have the impetus and it takes people to do that; there was not enough industry or whatever. But Fort McMurray is very active and they created -- they hired their own scientist to look at it, so it's one of the model ones that work well.

But, again, all they did was air. It's all we look at. So not even how the air is affecting the water, like taking water samples; they don't do that. Their focus is air quality so they would've been dealing with ambient stations and that. They eventually morphed a little bit into also doing a little bit of terrestrial stuff, I believe. They had some challenges obviously. They had multi-stakeholder boards and it was -- CASA model's all about multi-stakeholder involvement, which is good in consensus model, which is also good, kind of. Consensus is hard to drive; it's hard to drive change with consensus because it's difficult to when you have a large disparity of -- so you have First Nations; you have industry; you have government; you have Health; you have all these different parties; difficult to get consensus, so it was tough.

But they did a really good job. I was involved quite a bit with them and the development of that and the operation of it. But then they also had things like RAMP, which would've been, I don't want to



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say similar but Regional Aquatics Monitoring Program, which was, basically a collaborative effort of industry and only industry to do water quality monitoring and stuff like that. And, again, it was never designed as problem-solving or anything. It was here's, well, you have to take 50 samples. Can't we do this collaboratively together? And it was to meet the compliance requirements. There's been a lot of studies and lots of controversy around RAMP and was it, was the results, was there any credibility in it and it's, you know, there's lot of controversy around those kinds of things.

Then there was various other agencies like -- Oil Sands Developers Group was responsible to look at other major issues. There was the -- huh, trying to think of the organization now. Looked at big policy issues that used monitoring up there; so lots of different things like that. So, I'm not sure how the agency, the overall agency is going to deal with all the individual air sheds and water sheds and different groups like this in the province. There's lots of options available. They won't go away, I don't believe, and they shouldn't; they've got a lot of history, but also needs to be still under one umbrella, if you want.

So I'm not sure exactly where to go, but that was a major development in air quality again, so rather than an individual company you got -- well, you don't have to remember; you have to know -- when it started, individual companies were responsible for their individual monitoring; simple as that. There was no collaboration, so take for instance Fort Saskatchewan and quite often the day if you had major emissions from your plant you were required to put in basically four monitoring stations -- kind of with the compass points -- if you want. That gives you off-side the plant boundary to be able to get the emissions, depending which way the wind is blowing, and you put the four together and you have a fairly good picture of ambient monitoring, right? It was all designed, again, around compliance, proving or disproving, it's coming from that facility. Well, it's not necessarily designed to say "what's the air quality in the area"; it's designed around "Is it coming from my plant?"

In Fort Saskatchewan and Fort McMurray it was the same way. Companies would have monitors within a hundred feet of each other doing the same thing. But that's my monitor, that's your monitor; I'm required to have one, you're required to have one. So the air sheds took the approach afterwards, then, and, then, the government supported it saying well, "How can we do a better job? Surely, gosh, we don't need two monitors in the same place doing the same thing. Couldn't we take one of those and put it in a different place and get better bang for our buck?" So that's what -- excuse me -- a lot of that was about, was about creating a more collaborative approach and getting better monitoring.

The difficulty was in getting consensus to which monitors would go and, no, and stuff like that. So you have a NIMBY effect for putting in environmental things, right? Well, you'll have the same kind of thing with, in reverse of, "No, I want that monitor there; I like it there; I want it in my back yard."

AD: Yeah. Yeah.



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POULETTE: Because it tells me good information, but it maybe doesn't make the most "science" sense to be in your back yard? But, so, you had the reverse of the NIMBY syndrome of -- and then try to get consensus to say, well, sure, we can take monitor X and move it somewhere else, that would be better. Well, you need everybody to agree on a consensus model, which in Fort McMurray, I think, has suffered; personally, that's my thought. They've got a postage stamp area with all these monitors that basically all say the same thing; like they could do a much better job of moving them to diversify and look at some acid deposition issues, and stuff like that, and I think that's what's happening now through the air plan and, eh?

So, again, every model has its pros and cons and the consensus model is problematic in getting major change, or you want to change direction -- you want to go from right to left; very difficult to get a consensus model to make a diametric change. But to run it and operate it more collaborative and get stakeholder involvement, the people involved, was awesome; still is today I think.

AD: Now, you know, in terms of the infamous duck incidents, because of course there were two at Syncrude. You were involved with that. Do you want to talk about that and why it became such a big issue?

POULETTE: I had just went to Health when the duck issue just happened ...

AD: Ah, okay.

POULETTE: ... okay, but obviously all the people that reported to me were involved in it and I do have a lot of knowledge about it, but, again, diligence. It's all about diligence. Will ducks land? If you have a pond that is like hundred acres, it's got water on it, do you think ducks will land on it? Well, of course they will land on it, especially if they're migratory; they're flying from north to south and stuff. So you need to do a job of trying to keep them off of there, and there's technologies available. They always had sonic cannons and stuff but they've got newer technologies today that are better deterrents. They'll never be a 100 percent. They will -- I will guarantee you there will be another duck will die on Syncrude pond -- I absolutely guarantee it. There's nothing they can do about it. They have this open thing and got this wild creature flying; I mean you can try to deter it but short of putting a big bubble over it, I'm not sure how you would ever keep them off.

Now, can you mitigate it? Can you reduce it? Can you keep them away? Can you do everything possible? That's what it led to. It led to a whole -- "We got two summer students on a broken-down truck and we're a week late and, oh, we don't really have any written procedures, and those didn't seem to work," so really, was not given very much diligence. It's like put a little bit at it and, "I'm busy making oil." That's what it seemed like, okay? And being a little hard on it but, I think, that's kind of the way it was at the time. Totally preventable if they would have done that, and now there's some mitigating things about a big storm and, you know, there's always going to be, yeah, yeah, but. You just have to do a better job as a company of trying to establish those "yeah, buts," and take them away, right? What can you do with people, equipment and better technologies and stuff like that?



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AD: But the company didn't say *mea culpa* ...

POULETTE: No.

AD: ... I mean so that the government then was forced to -- can you describe that process and the conclusion?

POULETTE: Well, eventually, you know, like I mean they had -- we had to gather the evidence and, obviously, it was ducks, and they died, and they died on Syncrude's pond, and they didn't have effective measures in place, and they were definitely not diligent, and the government was able to prove that. And the company still said "Well, no, we couldn't have done anything better." I mean CN basically said the same thing in the Wabamun spill and yet it was the same kind of thing. No, you could've done a lot of things better; maybe not after it happened. Again, Syncrude was very responsible I think after the ducks died, but that's kind of a little late. It was expectation of planning, emergency response, did you look at it? Was it talked about at the corporate level? I don't know, what, whatever you think was necessary to do to put the focus on it because, if you had have focused on it, I guarantee you that wouldn't have happened.

AD: So they were fined. How much were they fined?

POULETTE: Oh gosh, I don't remember that one. That's ...

AD: I think it's the \$1 to \$2 million range I think.

POULETTE: It was a huge ...

AD: It was a stiff ...

POULETTE: ... huge fine. You know, the fines have been going up in the years and it's mostly about -- Susan McRory was a Crown prosecutor for years. I think she's retired but a good friend of mine, and she was all about trying to get a "creative" sentence out of them, type of thing. So not just put money - \$2 million for Syncrude - yeah, yeah, maybe hurt a little bit, and going into general revenue, it would be a blip in their radar screen. So, is there some better use that could be done, some educational program, some things that that money could support better rather -- because, once it went to general revenue, it's impossible to get that back out for those kinds of programs. So, creative sentencing was a major push in the nineties and 2000s; not just punishing the company but making them do some kind of reparations in the area related to it.

So, almost every environmental fine will have a major element of creative sentence attached to it -- educational activities or something; some support of something. Read a book; create a training program; do something. It was always a challenge to find programs that fit it, but Susan was always really good at it, but because you can't have a direct benefit to the company and hardly seems a fine. It probably shouldn't be something that the government would've done because, then, we should've



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done it. Why are we relying on somebody else to do it, you know? It's those side bar issues that, if they just had some funding they would be good and do something good. So that's what she was for.

AD: Can you talk about why the oil sands have become, you know, tar sands, the bad boy of, of the petroleum industry or any industry, and that the government's own reputation -- the Government of Alberta's and Alberta Environment's reputation -- has been tarnished by that?

POULETTE: Well, tar sands, yeah. I don't know, to me it's all -- it's more of the motivation of who was starting that and why, type of thing. So that's more started by the environmental movement that feels that the -- and I'm not even sure what their exact motivation is -- shut down the oil sands and not have it any more and go back to pristine and lose most of the economy in Alberta and Canada and lose most of jobs? Like what is the reasonable thing at the end of the day? I personally don't know what it's about, but it was the whole smear campaign, if you want, changing from oil to tar, is all about the environmental footprint and stuff like that and it sounds way worse -- those tar sands rather than the oil sands, right? And, so, it created that whole image.

Now, having said that, you know, like I mean if you get in a helicopter and fly the whole oil sands area, there's a large footprint there of disturbed land and, definitely, it's the first time I seen it, it just, it's mind-boggling how big, eh? Now, again, I think it's about responsible resource development, you know; it's not about no resource development? None? Is that, is that the answer? Is that what the tar sands people, the advocates say -- "It's tar sands and, well, you're causing too much climate change; you're causing too much footprints; you're causing too much this?" And the answer is no development? Hm. Wonder how our economy would be. How would we be living in this house? What, you know, I, you know, stagger to, to imagine what the world would be like without development. I mean it just wouldn't be where it is today.

I mean we talked about the development of technologies from the seventies to the 2000s. Well, those only happen because the drive was there, because industry was there, and you have issues and in the "nice utopic world" that we can anticipate all the problems and come up with a solution before it becomes a problem. That's just not reality. Solutions are driven because an issue is raised. A lot of development and technologies in the space race -- I think is using technology today that we wouldn't have a lot of these technologies if they didn't do the space race. That's a fact. You know, whether it's food or whatever, I don't even know all the million things that have been developed. They put all the money into development and research and, then, the rest of the world gets the benefit from it.

Well, I shouldn't -- you can't say that you want problems to happen and then you'll solve them, but the reality is problems will happen. We know what we know, and we regulate to the best ability of what we know. Will that guarantee -- and especially if you look back. Like I said, if I look 25 years from now and look back, why didn't they just do X? Well, because X wasn't thought of ...

AD: Available.

POULETTE: ... or know -- available ...



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AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: ... or known ...

AD: Yeah.

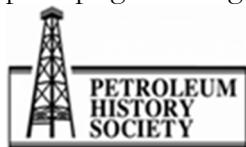
POULETTE: ... you know, I mean it's just reality. So, I don't know, I never, I didn't buy into a lot personally of the whole "tar sands" or "oil sands." Obviously, it's a major issue and it's a major tarnishing if we want because when it's tar, it's the government's not doing the right job, right? Industry has a responsibility; the government has a responsibility; and so obviously people have some criticism of that and maybe right, maybe wrong, whatever, you can do what you can do and could they have done a better job, the government? Course they could've done a better job. I think nobody in this world is being real. If you -- I'm perfect -- I did everything whether I'm a government or an individual, that's not true. So, obviously we could always have done a better job. Would we have anticipated it? I don't know; we obviously didn't; and so we did what did, you know, my small part in it type of thing and I'm very proud of, I think, the work we've done in developing all areas, in the monitoring and the investigations to emergency response and stuff like that.

Do we have a better province today than it was in 1970? I think there's less environmental issues today because we have a lot more knowledge from when I started to today. Like I said, I look back 25 years ago -- 30 years ago -- and just shake my head, "Wow, we did that?" That we, you wouldn't even conceive of allowing that to happen today. And I'm sure that'll happen 25 years from now and it's just development of the science and the stuff; much more education of people; also individual Albertans. Can't remember which one of the premiers quote it was, but it was basically -- it was like -- if there's two million residents in Alberta, I got four million eyes out there looking at issues and environment. It was very much that way.

Environmental knowledge of people today, whether it's taught in school and it's just a whole generation of stuff like that has helped to raise issues that perhaps wasn't an issue. Nobody would really care. It was about jobs and stuff like that. "Oh, some black smoke? Oh, yeah, okay." Where today if somebody saw some black smoke on the horizon, I guarantee you the government would hear about it or the agency responsible, and be forced to go out and take a look. Not -- it would be forced -- they would be out; they would have procedures; they would go do it. Where, yeah, black smoke in 1970, yeah, okay.

AD: That was just a cost of doing business, you know.

POULETTE: Yeah, that's it, you know. So again, the environmental consciousness of the population is so much greater today, which is a good thing. It -- they are the advocates; they're the people that keep you on your toes, if you want, or the government making sure the rules and regulations are fit and keep up to the public expectations. So maybe that's the biggest issue of the tar sands -- is people's consciousness, some people's especially, environmental consciousness has perhaps grown larger than the government can keep up perhaps at this point? I don't know. Might



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be a theory to look at but, you know, so, people are very conscious now and they're very involved and they want to be involved and the government is -- wants them to be involved and I think the whole system is enriched the more stakeholder involvement you have in it.

AD: Now, you were still in government when this became an issue on the radar screen and that you began to look at different kinds of collaborative regimes in terms of monitoring; you began to look at a reputable monitor, you know, arm's length from government and academe.

I think that must be a lawnmower, can we just pause ...

AD: ... about you envisioning what the next 10 to 20 years in your area will look like in government; corporate social responsibility -- I mean, you know, all of those things, but then I'm going to go back to the question of you in your years in environmental protection, taking a historical, a long-term view, and you remember what we talked about is that the pulp mills, the oil sands and again it's a part of that futurist -- that perspective. Okay?

JB: Yeah, good to go.

AD: Okay. So then, you know, putting on your sort of futurist hat, what do you think, you know, the Alberta government and the federal government's position on the environment and the oil sands is going to look like in the next five, 10, 15, 20 years?

POULETTE: I think we're going to stay in the realm of a lot of stakeholder involvement or knowledge and stuff like that. I don't think that going away. People are raised in environmental consciousness and that'll just continue. Environmental advocates will always be there and they'll continue and will continue to pressure governments. Governments, I think, will take a hard look at what's their role and what's industry's role; where's the accountability, where you do things, type of thing.

An example like what we talked before, like I said, monitoring is perhaps the start of that. It was always a need for monitoring. There's never been a question we shouldn't do monitoring; it's how it gets done. So approvals in the seventies and eighties, nineties, even today's approvals, all say the same thing; industry, you have a responsibility to do it and we'll tell you how to do it, what to do; you'll go buy the equipment; you'll run it; you'll operate it; you'll send us the results.

Well, that is proving to be unacceptable today and it will be totally unacceptable tomorrow. It's the credibility behind it, even though these are ordinary people, like people make -- like a Mr. Jones, a monitoring manager for blah blah blah company -- some evil Dr. Doom. He's an ordinary Albertan; he's got kids in soccer and kids in ballet and stuff like that. I just believe in the human good, but so I don't believe that they're purposely trying to hide things; like I found all these environmental problems and am hiding them in the back desk. I just don't believe that happens. I'm sorry, I just don't.



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Did they find them? Do they look for them actively? Could they have done better jobs? Well, those are different questions. Was it somebody on purpose found an environmental problem that kills fish or perhaps has some liability for hurting people and, and they just didn't tell anybody? I don't believe it. People will have to show me that; I just don't believe the human element could deal with that. Maybe up through the corporate structure -- everything -- a company could do that maybe, but companies are made by individuals -- sorry, got the individual monitoring guy that maybe he worked for me last week and he's working for the company today. What, did he turn into a criminal overnight? I just don't believe that, like you know, so I believe in good.

So we'll see more of that; we'll see more accountability from industry though -- about accountable for their emissions and stuff like that, but not accountable to monitor them and stuff. I believe the government's role or arm's length or whatever, whatever it morphs into at the end of the day is somebody that doesn't have a direct responsibility either to regulate or direct responsibility to make oil and make money to be able to say the state of the environment is "X" and it's either getting better or getting worse or here's a new problem and stuff like that. Be government's role after that to say, "Oh, we found that; where's it coming from; and how do we fix it?" And that role will be a collaborate role, or a regulatory role and say collaborative, be a regulatory role, which has a certain amount of collaboration in it with industry saying, "Okay, here's what it's showing; here's how we have to fix it"; or "Tell me how you have to fix it," type of thing. So you see more of that.

I think as technologies get better, whether it's analytical techniques and stuff like that, or monitoring techniques, they'll know more and they'll find things that they didn't find 20 years ago and go, "Wow, well we should do something about that." And they will. But, and then the critics will come back out, as they say today, "Wow, why didn't you find that 20 years ago?" It wasn't possible. It just wasn't possible. We didn't have that. And now, "You, well, should've been and you should've found that problem though." Well, that's reality, you just don't, eh?

So again, as you get better things and more -- better technologies -- and I don't know about smarter people, but better tools at least, and more knowledge as we grow and things will change, and they'll find things and they'll do better job; there'll be better technologies in the control of some of the emissions and stuff coming from the major plants.

Again, I go back and look at some of the emission points that happened like in the seventies and eighties. I gave you the example of the co-op -- I mean the fertilizer plants and major emission of sulphur dioxide. Well, those don't happen today. But they did then; and will there be better emission controls and standards and stuff? Well, they'll be different and they'll be better because the better technologies and better things and it won't go backwards; it'll, you know -- they'll constantly look for better ways to reduce emissions. Like if you look at the sulphur dioxide coming from the major facilities up there, it's like a tenth of what it was ten years ago; it truly is. Now they have lots of work to do still and they will.

So that's why the direction I see it going -- I think government will be always involved in the regulatory part of it and saying, "Well, hold it, here's the best -- there's the policies of the day and



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the company's held accountable to do that. I think they'll look at, you know, who knows where investigations will go, and approvals. They're always looking for streamlining of that. One advocate, I don't know, I always get confused personally of right or left government but one advocate, one side of the equation if you want. Government should be in the business of governing and the management of the money, if you want, of the province, and setting the rules, setting the policies and ensuring they're complied with. They're not in the business of doing. That's private industry. So would industry, would government, issue approvals? Maybe; maybe not. One side of the political coin, I would argue, say "No."

AD: No.

POULETTE: ... we shouldn't be in that business. We should set the standards by which approvals are issued; we should set the policies and, you can only do this or do that or that, and then we should check to make sure they're followed [through] but we don't necessarily have to issue approvals. Could be "approvals are us" issuing approvals. Now, that's a really big jump, but it's happened in small areas in this government already. Like, if you go back 20 years ago, all the building inspections, for instance, all the building inspections were all done by the Department of Labour; everybody; they all -- now Department of Labour does none of those. They're all done by private companies -- "permit pro" and stuff -- and when you want one, what do you do? You pay for it. And could Environment go that way? Ah, maybe. I don't know. That's one thought.

AD: I mean, it's really challenging because when you look at the whole concept of the "social license to operate," I mean it, it presupposes that the government has a role in that.

POULETTE: And it will; it always will have a role.

AD: In the public -- in the public trust -- because it acts in the public trust.

POULETTE: Ah, but there's different ways to gather the public trust, right? That's what I'm saying; I think you could look at different ways more effectively because there's always pressure on government to downsize. You really need all those people; you know, like okay; so there will always be that stigma, if you want, so yes, people want more but they don't want to necessarily see more in government, right? And so there's always a pressure on government to "what's the right mix of people and that," so staying more to policies and stuff like that perhaps overcomes that a bit in ensuring things, putting the right rules, putting a robust system in place to ensure that if a different person was issuing permits they could only issue in a certain way and then you'd have some kind of checks and balances to ensure that they're doing the right things and kind of auditing or, I don't know -- you know, just envision that -- you make sure that you're doing the right thing. And then to have some system to test, "Okay, well how do we get better?" -- because we should always been looking at what's the continuous improvement out of that part.

So there's a possible element to go there that will be a huge climb because people see it as government's role to make sure and do those things. And yet, there's going to be a constant pressure on resources and budgets to do it. I told my colleagues many years ago, if we're relying on



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a monitoring system under the government budget, we'll fail. We'll absolutely fail. So I'm going to be competing against a school, a hospital, a bridge, upgraded roads; you think of all the things that the government spends money on today; health care system? So better monitor, \$50 million for monitoring or \$50 million for something in the health care system and if it is one or the other, what are you going to win, eh?

So monitoring needed another look at. Again, do we need to monitor the air? If there was no industry there, no problems; would we need to monitor the air and the water so bad? Well, probably not; not as intense anyway. So, obviously, they should put the major role of paying for it [on industry]. They're the ones getting the benefit from it. So it changes things like that and I think you'll see more of that. Again, the thought of the seventies, not only you'll pay for it [but] you'll be totally responsible; you'll just send me the results. Well, that's created many issues ...

AD: The situation that we have today.

POULETTE: ... many issues -- credibility and ...

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: ... and -- "I don't do a lot of research things; I don't look for new things. You told me to do 'X,' I'll do X and I'll do it to the best of my ability."

AD: So that you have to have scientific establishments in universities funded by environmental agencies ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... doing that out-of-the-box research that could reveal ...

POULETTE: Issues.

AD: ... issues ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... yeah.

POULETTE: Yeah, so it changes.

AD: So that ...

POULETTE: You'll always have -- there'll always be a place for that. Actually, when I was -- part of my portfolio, my last one was Science, Evaluation and Reporting was the research budget and stuff like that, and try to encourage a program of supporting universities and their post-graduate



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[research] and stuff like that, to look at -- well, here, perhaps you need to look in this area and we'll fund you some cash or something in that area type of thing. So I think we need to embrace that.

AD: Well, the parallel is that AOSTRA did that in terms of the tech, technological development of the industry.

POULETTE: Mmhm.

AD: Why can't it be viewed as environmental....

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... technological development and that then funding programs established to fund chairs, you know, water, pollution, air, whatever, to get that kind of innovation where you have a major research establishment, professors and their graduate students looking at these things.

POULETTE: Absolutely. I -- that was one of the things I was advocating for and going towards. We're not there yet; there's a little bit of that happening but there could be a lot more of that happening. The government machine, if you want, is more about widget making, right? The standard, the day-to-day do a good job at it and stuff like that, but it's not the research element that's going to get big change and stuff; it's just not designed around that kind of stuff, eh? It just truly isn't, eh?

The agency, I think, will be a mix between that because again, it's going to be focus -- if the direction where I think they're going, it will be a lot of science based, so it will be scientists and scientists are always about well, "What about this, what about that?" you know, not just about "Let me look at the numbers that exist already."

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: It's more of a ...

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: ... questioning ...

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: ... and "Oh, what can we do," you know? "What is the hypothesis today we're trying to check," type of thing ...

AD: Yeah.



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POULETTE: ... and so it will lead itself -- I don't know -- again, resources are always an issue and people say \$50 million for a study. Like I think if we looked at all the monitoring that happens in the province today by everybody, I'd probably think we're over \$500 million.

AD: But is it getting the results that ...

POULETTE: Well, no, because it's all ...

AD: ... I mean that's the question ...

POULETTE: ... it's all independent ...

AD: It's scattered, yeah.

POULETTE: ... so it's all scattered; it's not ...

AD: So a consolidated regime makes sense involving public and private sector, universities and ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... other research establishments.

POULETTE: It'll just be very complex. When we started the project we did, obviously, just like anybody else does, kind of go internet search; going to talk to other places in the world. If somebody already created a mousetrap and we just have to Alberta-size it that would be cool if we could do that, you know, but we don't know that until you go out and look. We did -- my team did extensive [research] -- I don't know how many countries we looked at and what we found is there isn't a system, if you want, that just, we'll just change the name of it and we'll make it Alberta. It didn't work that way, and most of them are at the country level, which is interesting.

AD: International.

POULETTE: At the national level, like in Europe and stuff, it's at the continent level in Europe; you got the European Union Environmental Association that is responsible for all the monitoring in Europe -- water and air and stuff like that. So when you look at a system like that, it's very difficult to say, well, how can the province of Alberta try and institute something like that, you know, that doesn't seem to make -- it was definitely not directly transportable type of thing. Then there was places like Norway that seemed to have a good system but they had a different, total different social system that supported it money-wise and so take away the social, would the system work?

AD: Right.

POULETTE: Well, probably not. So then we looked at, well, if the, say five parts of a monitoring system -- I'm just inventing a number -- could we transport a reporting part, if you want, from



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somebody else? Well, that didn't really work either because it requires all the things before you get to the reporting; can't just -- it's not a "plug and play" and we'll take the five best things from the five best systems, put them together and we'll have the best system. That didn't seem to be at all reasonable; it just wouldn't work and stuff.

So we wound up with taking a lot of the concepts and stuff and creating the model for Alberta and creating a system -- and the system is basically, in my interpretation, I think it's pretty consistent with a lot of other people's -- it's a set of boxes, if you want, and then they're all connected -- one leads to another and it's about the boxes themselves but it's about the connectors also, about how you make it -- ensure it flows from one and its consistency and stuff; how you pay attention to it, so if you have an environmental problem, how does that get raised? How do you design a monitoring program? How do you execute the monitoring program? What do you do with the data and storage? What do you do -- how do you evaluate that? Is there some standard techniques around that? And then is there some reporting on it? And when you report on it then are there checks and balances? Is it doing the right thing? Did you have the right impact and do you have to go back again?

That was basically the system. We put it in a drawing, called it IMERF and I think it's probably some of the roots of what the system's going to be at today where individuals -- things before were all handled by different elements, so reporting was handled differently by different people and evaluation was all over the board. Data storage was more consistent, but still -- monitoring is all over the place -- all from industry to this to that. Even designing monitoring in the beginning is like -- the hypothesis checking comes from a myriad of different things, all the way from "I want one in my backyard" to science-based, you know, so compliance-based and stuff.

So the system -- there was no system in Alberta is what we really found. We had individual parts of a system and so the monitoring is trying -- system today is trying to create that system; systematic approach to it so one leads into the other; one is cognizant [of all elements]. It's not much point in finding money to buy new monitors, and this is a real example. We found we were able to find some money through infrastructure system -- money for some new water quality monitors. That's a good story. I think it was for a hundred or something more - we found the money for and they were needed and science was used to say, "Well, put one over here and one over here," and we went out and we did that. And we put them everywhere, but then afterwards there were no resources available to operate them, to keep them updated, to run them and ...

AD: The manpower ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... and to analyze the data ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... I mean it's all ...



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POULETTE: And we wound up shutting down a bunch of them because we couldn't manage them.

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: It's like saying I was able to buy a car; I'm able to borrow money and do that, but I haven't got any money for gas. Well, what's -- what's the point of the car? So a system was -- make sure you got the money for the gas; make sure you got a maintenance; make sure you got a driver; make sure that, you know, you got all those things before you put it in the -- the wheels in motion. And a monitoring system is the same; it's just a much more complicated system. Make sure that you have a plan in mind at the end. What are you going to do with this data? Is it going to be public? Is it not? How you make that public, because if you gather all this stuff but then you don't have a system for a data base that is accessible for the people, won't people think you're hiding the data? But, but not really hiding it; you just don't have the mousetrap available to make it public and it's not -- we talked about websites earlier.

Creating a publicly-accessible, a public accessible data is not an easy task. It's a very complicated task. You ensure the data integrity and all availability and stuff like that, eh? So the system was created now to say, "Hold it, let's take that in mind. Let's not do it by media; let's be cognizant of effects monitoring and stuff like that, not just air quality monitoring; is it coming from plant 'X' and causing me a problem here? What is the effect on the environment? Is it on the air zone's water? Is there some crossover?" That's all the system approach to it.

AD: And the cumulative aspect of it.

POULETTE: The cumulative aspect of it ...

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: ... and stuff like that, you know, so really monitoring stations I think are designed, or should be designed today not to pinpoint "is it coming from Shell or Suncor or Syncrude or whatever." It's "what is the environmental condition at this point, and is it acceptable? Is it going up? Is it going down?" If it's not acceptable, then there needs to be other processes in place, say "Well, where's it coming from?" But the monitoring system should be the trigger, if we want "Oh, where's it coming from, right? " And then you start; that's where the whole system comes in place, so, if there's a problem, how do we design things to re-monitor the problem, fix that problem, put policies in place to change that, and then monitor again -- did it fix the problem?

A simplistic example of it is 2, 4-D example, I'll give you -- if you want -- of the system, I think works reasonably well. The North Saskatchewan River -- all the major rivers in Alberta are monitored on a monthly basis and they have been forever, long-term monitoring network. They're monitored for a whole plethora of different compounds and stuff like the standards and some background basically. In the nineties, it was showing downstream from Edmonton and Calgary a major, a major increase in 2, 4-D levels in the river. And 2, 4-D is a common herbicide used for



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dandelions and stuff like that, and the government was disturbed by the level it was up to so it started the process investigating, “Well, what could be causing that?”

And, eventually, through a lot of hard work it was found a major contributor was Weed and Feed, a herbicide fertilizer mixed together, the granular stuff you spread on your lawn. And, through some tests and studies and work with the Pesticide Institute, it was decided -- it was found that like 85 percent of the herbicide you put on -- Weed and Feed -- goes down the storm, in a storm sewer into the river. Simple as that; it's not effective and most of it runs off, runs into the river. So that, you know, so that led to a look at “Well, okay, how can we change that?” They had all kinds of options and the one that they chose was to ban Weed and Feed. You can't buy it in Alberta anymore. I don't think it's necessarily illegal to put it on your lawn because that would be too hard to police, but you can't buy it; you can't purchase in Alberta. Doesn't stop somebody from going to Saskatchewan and buying it and bringing it back to Alberta, but, you know, we thought that, you've got to try some technique at doing it. So they did that.

So they're in the process right now still of re-evaluating and monitoring again. Did that policy change have an impact on the river? If it did, presumably the 2, 4-D level should drop. And so I'm not sure the result of it now -- haven't been involved in it for a while -- but certainly two years ago they were just relooking at that. The band came in I think three years ago. And so that's an example of a systematic approach to the monitoring, right? Have a problem; figure it out; do some different monitoring; change the policy; then figure out did the policy work? Did it have the desired input? Did you get the better environmental result? If it didn't, then you've got to go back to kind of square one saying, “Well, maybe we have the wrong hypothesis; maybe it wasn't that. Maybe people are going to Saskatchewan; maybe people bought 50 bags of it and are still storing it in the garage and still using it.” You know, there's all kinds of different scenarios, right?

AD: So in essence you're saying that these are complex issues that in terms of, you know, people would -- environmentalists -- I think would like to state that the bitumen found in the river systems in that region, you know, comes from seepage and, or whatever; that it, then, and from the industry perspective, yeah, if that was the case then there is the silver bullet approach. But these are very, very complex issues. And that it allows me now to ask you a kind of summative question in terms of what you've seen, in terms of environmental issues and regulations and the role of governments in your lengthy career.

POULETTE: Before I do that, you just raised an issue with me about, a little bit about seepage, is it this or that or the Athabasca River and stuff like that. You know, it leads me, always leads me to the conclusion that it's -- environmentalists, it seems all or nothing, right? And if I, if the question was asked “If the oil sands companies have any effect on the environment?” What's the answer to that? The government would, I think, for years would've said, “Well, no.” -- doing this so it would be managed. I think it's a foolish thing. Of course they have an impact.

AD: Land disturbance alone.



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POULETTE: Of course they're having an impact. I mean it's ridiculous to think you're putting a big industry and doing that. Is the impact greater than the environment can withstand or is it causing environmental problems, or how much is natural versus anthropogenic? You know, those are different questions and those are the questions that we put through the monitoring. Has there been oil, oil sands, oil -- whatever -- going into the river before the oil sands were there? The answer is absolutely 1000 percent, "Yes." You can see the oil sands if you go up to Fort McMurray; it comes right out of the bank, seeps right into the river. Okay.

And if the question is "Are the oil sands contributing to oil on the river?" The answer has to be absolutely, "Yes." Now what is the proportion and how do you do that, then there's a communal effect, a problem in drinking the water in the river, and using the water. Those are the questions of the day, you know, type of thing. What can you do about it? Even if industry spent money and time and effort and put not another drop in the river, there'd still be oil in the river.

AD: Because it's a naturally existing formation that has been there since time ...

POULETTE: Exactly.

AD: ... immemorial ...

POULETTE: Exactly.

AD: ... and so you can never remove it entirely from ...

POULETTE: Exactly, so ...

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: ... you know, it's -- those are the questions that need to happen and government has to be big -- I think -- and be real and not hide its head in the sand, if you want. Like, I think the government at some point or some people in the government said, "Well, no, they're not having impact on the environment." Well, that's a load of rubbish; of course they are. Well, any development has to have some impact; it's not possible to not. Now, is it manageable? Is it causing a problem? Does it meet the standards of the day? You know, again, I repeat myself, but those are the better questions ...

AD: Questions, yeah.

POULETTE: ... or the questions that need to be asked, not "Is it having an impact?" I can answer that now; I don't have to spend a dime. You know, give me a million dollars, cool, cause I can answer the question -- "Yes, they are." Now is that something we can live with? Or, "Is it going to cause problems to future generations? Blah blah blah blah." Those are different questions and those get much more complicated than not just yes or no.



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So, summation, summation; again, we've talked about it that when I look back on my career and when I've talked to different people and things I see my career having three major prongs associated with it, and the three prongs have all developed or changed. So one is monitoring, one is that investigative or enforcement or compliance or put various words on it, type of thing; and the last is emergency response; and they're all inter-related. Emergency response has an investigative element - what caused it and stuff like that; it's got usually some type of monitoring associated with it, so they're all symbiotic, if you want. But each one of them has their own discipline; each one is developed and changed; and each one has had its major focal points or change points, if you want, that it made major change things.

So the big emission from the Western Co-op Fertilizer changed a lot of how we do business on air emissions and stuff like that. That was one of the major changes. The whole Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, the development of it changed the way we did business on multimedia and looking at things and -- much more -- gave a very strong role for compliance and enforcement, which really wasn't in the Acts before; they didn't really have -- had a little, small, little parts of it about powers and stuff like that. But [in the new Act] there's major elements about inspections, inspectors, investigators, enforcement actions, directors, the whole EPAs [Environmental Protection Agencies] got major sections of that; so obviously the government needed to change then to live up to it and so we morphed and changed and grew to what we have today, the compliance system.

And emergency response -- there was no big impetus in the eighties other than we weren't really doing anything at it till we needed to be much more involved and we were; and it was slow changes over the years. The major change was Wabamun -- CN train derailment into Wabamun Lake and the cause of it and stuff like that; so [this] changed how we looked at emergency response -- what was our role; what's government's role as a whole; and how can we do a better job at that? And so changed our direction on how we, we, we do that. Well, significantly it's just totally different today than it was.

We kind of went back to a little bit more of approach like we had with PERT originally. It's called ASERT now, ... and having people specialize and that's their job and then they do planning and emergency response planning and assure people have plans, and work with them so not just reactionary -- do some front end policy stuff and stuff like that.

Investigative-wise, I don't think the Wabamun spill -- it didn't change anything. It was a major investigation just like all, and it resulted in some major fines and, again, the company was found not diligent in their prevention of the spill in the first place. It's just simple as that, you know. The reality is train derailments will happen. They can minimize them. They -- there's not a single person today that will ever say that there will be no train derailments. Just like nobody will ever be able to say there'll never be another pipeline spill; that's just not reality; or a train wreck or a plane crash or whatever. It's the job of society and everybody to minimize those, do everything possible to minimize them, right? But to eliminate them, I don't believe that's possible.



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So in the Wabamun case, they needed to have better preventative -- to prevent the things in the first place -- and, if it did happen, which is an eventuality, then you needed better procedurals in place to deal with the fallout, if you want, of it, which was sadly lacking in both of those. Some of the response of CN initially -- like certainly the first 24 hours that the investigation is focused on -- what's the first 24 hours before it happened, and the first 24 hours after the first 24 hours, CN put in a lot of resources. I don't remember what the final butcher bill was but it was like \$50 million or something like that to clean up the spill, and they did a good job. The government was involved and I was one of the commanders at the time of marshalling and making sure things happen.

But the first 24 hours we're talking about canoes and one guy and a broken-down truck and a flat tire. You're talking about millions of litres of spill causing lots and lots of environment problems. You're talking about a multinational company and we're talking about, well, I didn't get there on time because I had a flat tire? And, you know, it was things like this -- it was just almost comical, and their emergency response plan for the event was a hand-written note in the back pocket of the environmental manager that constituted three pages of names of potential clean-up contractors, and that was your pre-planning in case you have a spill? And, so things like this -- that was where the company was found not diligent in the prevention of a spill that eventually caused major issues. So that was a major -- that was another way.

The first time we had done a major investigation we modelled it on a similar approach to [what]-- the City Police did against victims -- prostitutes were being killed and stuff, so they created a special team and focused on taking them away from their jobs, and we did the same thing. We worked with our federal counterparts, so I was the head of that particular team. We had investigators from Environment; we had investigators from Environment Canada; we had investigators from Wildlife Canada too that, from migration from migratory birds and stuff, and fish and stuff like that, so worked as a collaborative team. We work -- we had a prosecutor assigned specifically to the case. We worked on it for, gosh, seemed forever, but it was probably about four months -- and we went through, oh gosh, gigabytes of data and pictures and files. We had, I don't know, maybe 500 interviews of people and what they had seen and what they did, and contractors, and so it was a major, major effort.

At the end, the file constituted about -- had to be about eight or nine ARC boxes, besides all the computer data, so a major, major file and right away we did. Resulted in charges under both the Fisheries Act, Migratory Birds Act and the Environmental Protection Enhancement Act and I believe CN pleaded guilty to them eventually, but I remember the meeting that I had with them before we filed the charges and kind of laying it out and their belief still that, well, there's nothing we could do better.

AD: But you know what's interesting and it, and it's a nice way of ending the interview, that both the provincial and federal governments have in place processes or vehicles for addressing serious environmental infractions.

POULETTE: Oh, I believe they do and, you know, it's a ...



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AD: Whether they're oil-sands related or anything else.

POULETTE: We work collaboratively. Different levels of government, different things, you know, so things that are important to Alberta -- are not necessarily important, or the same level of importance on a Canada basis, you know. I like to think that we're the centre of the universe but we're not, you know, and so it's sometimes difficult working with a federal agency that has a more -- a bigger focus, if you want. It's not always the same importance. But I'd argue that we've done some really good work over the years with our federal counterparts, both ways. Hasn't always been smooth sailing; sometimes it seems like a brother/sister relationship that, hm, yeah, perhaps they don't always get along but eventually they do and cooperate and we've done some really good things. There's tons of examples of good working relationships with the federal government to address problems in Alberta, whether it be in monitoring or regulatory or standards or stuff like that. Yeah, there's numerous, numerous examples of great, great things, especially at working levels that I would argue there is a great relationship with most of our federal counterparts.

AD: Good. Is there anything else? Otherwise I think that's a wrap.

POULETTE: I feel like I've told you 37 years of history.

AD: Yes, that's exactly what you're supposed to feel like.

POULETTE: Yeah, it's interesting the more we talk then, you know, more memories flood back in about various things and how things have changed and stuff like that, and again, I stand by the statement at the beginning -- I look back to 25, 30 years ago in disbelief that those things could have been allowed to happen in any of the air, the water, whatever. But, having said that, I firmly believe [that in] another 25 years, we'll have the same look back and it'll have the same impression saying "Wow, you let that stuff happen?" They'll look at the oil sands and 25 years from now when technologies have changed and we'll have Star Trek "beam me up" or something and how to deal with waste recycling. They'll change it back into something, I don't know, whatever they'll do and they'll look back on today and they'll say "Gee, those environmental guys were right, that was terrible, I can't believe they let that happen." But....

AD: And someone has said about tailings ponds that 25 years from now they may just be viewed as a feed stock and that the whole ...

POULETTE: Yeah.

AD: ... issue of, you know, the way that we're talking about it today is ...

POULETTE: They'll find ...

AD: ... ridiculous.

POULETTE: ... they'll find some valuable mineral or they'll find ...



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AD: Exactly.

POULETTE: ... something or something that will be making a resource instead of a problem ...

AD: A problem.

POULETTE: ... type of thing ...

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: ... you know. It's just the creativity and innovation of man is continuous I think and, and it will -- you can't imagine. If you could imagine what it will be like, wouldn't you start doing that today?

AD: Yeah.

POULETTE: You know, I mean, so you can't even use your imagination where things will change and how they'll change. I can't anyway, probably somebody smarter than me can. But I know they will and I know they will be better and I know they'll look back and they'll go "Oh, wow, I can't believe that happened back then," just as I'm doing today from what 25, 30 years ago, and like if I could somehow bring that video to today and show people today -- the environmentalists today -- and say, "Hhm, look where we've come from; look what was in 1975, '76, '77 and look where we are today, and how can you tell me that that isn't like a monster step that's just like going to the moon." And I believe the same thing will happen ...

AD: 25 years on.

POULETTE: ... in the next 25. That's ...

AD: What a lovely way to end. Thank you very much.

POULETTE: All right.

[THE INTERVIEW CONCLUDES.]



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