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**Brand Interviews**

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**Non-Government Organizations**

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## Introduction

In October and November of 2008, individual interviews were held with representatives from seven non-government organizations that expressed interest in providing input and comment on the development of the Alberta Brand. Calder Bateman Communications conducted all interviews. The interviews were conducted as an open dialogue about Alberta, within a consistent question framework focused on interviewees' perceptions about the image of Alberta. The organizations represented diverse interests including social services, immigrant supports and environmental interests.

## Key Themes from Interviews

When asked about current perceptions about Alberta, most of those interviewed expressed that those outside of Alberta viewed the province in four ways:

1. Alberta is defined by its wealth (natural resources). This can be either a positive or a negative. For those looking for opportunity, the wealth of the province is a drawing factor for jobs and a strong future. But at times that wealth is associated with negative attitudes such as "arrogance"; "lack of empathy for those less fortunate"; and the sense that Alberta is "focused on money".
2. Recently, Alberta is more defined by the oil sands and related environmental concerns. If there are negative perceptions of Alberta, most of those interviewed felt the association was with "dirty oil" and the rate, scale and social and environmental impacts of oil sand development.
3. Alberta is defined by natural beauty. For some of those interviewed, external perceptions of Alberta are defined by the mountains, lakes, clear air, and compelling landscapes.
4. Alberta is defined by stereotypes. It is incorrectly viewed as homogeneous (when in fact the face of Alberta is changing dramatically); primarily rural (yet the cities are growing and sophisticated, with diverse populations and cultures); primarily driven by our agriculture and oil and gas sectors (when there are in fact, emerging innovations and technologies). Those interviewed were concerned that these stereotypes do not reflect the complexity and changing nature of the province.

When asked about their personal views of Alberta, the interviewees were open about their concerns and expressed a strong belief that the province has tremendous potential for the future. There are opportunities “for Alberta to be even better”. On the positive side, they spoke of:

- Strength of character
- Independence
- Decisiveness
- Diversity
- Freedom, accessibility – you can go anywhere
- Fairness
- Work ethic
- Integrity

Their aspirations for Alberta were many and varied. They wanted to see Alberta:

- Address environmental concerns – and be seen globally to have done so
- Take full advantage of technology
- Develop a culture of cooperation and integration to achieve positive action
- Protect health, biodiversity and natural areas
- Remove attitudinal barriers, create inclusive environments
- Maintain a high quality of life – safety, employment opportunities
- Demonstrate a capacity to be open and interested (in diversity of the population, immigration)
- Be generous with our good fortune

They felt a future Alberta could be described with words such as:

- Healthy
- A place with excellent urban centres
- Free
- Vibrant
- Opportunity
- Wild Spaces
- Generous Community – sharing the wealth

- Responsibility
- Inclusive
- Accepting of differences
- Safe – physically, emotionally, psychologically

All of those interviewed were asked what could be done to change current negative perceptions about Alberta. The response can be summed up in one word – action. Most of the respondents felt that actions – large or small – by government, industry and individuals should reflect the values of Albertans. They encourage action that:

- Demonstrates value for the environment:
  - Protection of wildlife,
  - Protection of watershed.
- Broadens the perspective on energy for the future to more than oil and gas. We can lead cleaner energy alternatives.
- Engages people at a community level.
- Shows Alberta as a clean, safe and friendly place – make it human, not about scenery and resources.
- Builds on our strengths – exudes a genuine confidence about Alberta.
- Shows courage and reflects a commitment to diversity and respect for other cultures.

When asked specifically about a brand for Alberta, common themes emerged.

1. People – the brand needs to be from the people and reflect the people: immigrants, disabled, aboriginal, the cultural diversity, the economic diversity; every Albertan should see themselves in the brand. It needs to be more than about government.
2. Action – the brand cannot be something we talk about, it needs to be something we do.
3. Values – the brand needs to demonstrate the values of Albertans: integrity, strength, hard work, opportunity, independence.