



May 28, 2009

Premier Ed Stelmach  
Room 307, Legislature Building  
10800 - 97th Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Stelmach,

re: Making Petroleum Well Data Freely Available to the Public

I believe the people of Alberta have a right to know where their petroleum resources are, and they should not have to pay any fee to obtain this information. My efforts to realize this objective, ongoing for a year-and-a-half, have been frustrated at all levels of government. I'm therefore writing to you, having exhausted all other avenues of enquiry, with the belief you can provide the necessary leadership to change the status quo.

The current source of this information is the Energy Resources Conservation Board, and the only terms under which they will provide it is to purchase their *General Well Data File*. The initial fee for this file is \$66,491.00 plus an annual fee of \$6,018.00 to receive updates thereafter. This is obviously well beyond the means of ordinary citizens. There are a number of private companies who do pay these fees, bundle the data with their software, and resell it to the general public. These solutions still cost thousands of dollars, and in effect, deny citizens' access to information they already own.

I have proposed to the ERCB that, if they will provide the *General Well Data File* to my company at no charge, we will store this data on our website ([www.intellog.com](http://www.intellog.com)) and re-distribute it to the general public at no charge. My company would assume all costs associated with these efforts, and therefore the cost to the ERCB for this undertaking would be absolutely zero. Unfortunately, the essential response to these enquiries, which included two letters to the Minister of Energy, was "*this is not our policy, and we do not intend to change it.*"

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There are many reasons which support making such data 'open source' -- that is, freely available to anybody and everybody. The most compelling of these is it puts the data in the hands of a wide variety of entrepreneurs such as myself, who can then build innovative and exciting applications with it. These start ups create new, high-paying private sector jobs, and their products and services make industry more efficient and therefore more competitive in an increasingly competitive world.

Many jurisdictions have seen the wisdom of this approach. The most notable would be the recently-announced [Data.gov](http://Data.gov) initiative launched by the Obama administration in the United States. The City of Vancouver has also launched a similar effort. (References for both are attached.) I therefore urge you, Premier Stelmach, to be on the right side of history, and to provide the necessary vision and leadership to break the logjam.

I would be happy to provide additional information, answer any of your questions, or if necessary, meet with you or your representatives at any time or place. Until then, thank you very much for your assistance and support, and I look forward to hearing from your office in the near future.

Sincerely,

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## Notes, References and Additional Reading

***Democratizing Data*** An article from the Whitehouse blog describing their *Data.gov* initiative. It includes a video featuring Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra describing the benefits of 'open source' government data feeds.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/Democratizing-Data/>

***City of Vancouver embraces open data, standards and source*** A CBC article describing the City of Vancouver's move to open source applications and data.

<http://www.cbc.ca/technology/story/2009/05/22/tech-vancouver-open-source-standards-software-city.html>

***Terence C. Gannon*** The LinkedIn profile of *Intellog's* Founder can be found at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/TerenceGannon>, and contains biographical information documenting Mr. Gannon's nearly 20 years of experience in the oil & gas information technology sector.

