

# Critics raise concerns over oil industry involvement in Alberta curriculum redesign <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Source:** Edmonton Journal

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 12 Mar 2014

## EXCERPTS

Critics say they're worried about the direction of Alberta's massive overhaul of school curriculum after it was revealed Tuesday major oil companies are being consulted on changes.

A document posted to the Alberta Education website indicates companies such as Syncrude Canada, Cenovus Energy and Suncor Energy are included among partners "in helping draft Alberta's future curriculum for our students" from kindergarten to Grade 12.

Specifically, Syncrude and Suncor are listed under a working group being led by the Edmonton public school board in the K-to-3 redesign.

NDP education critic Deron Bilous, who raised the issue Tuesday in the legislature, said it is "shocking and very concerning" that oil and gas companies could have a hand in shaping the curriculum taught to kindergarten students.

"This is when kids are in their most formative years, when they're the youngest and there's no reason why oil companies need to be setting the direction," he said. "It really makes me wonder what value will they gain from it and how this is going to impact our students."

Mike Hudema, climate and energy campaigner for Greenpeace Canada called it "very troubling.

"I think it's the job of the government and teachers to present well-balanced views on different issues and subjects within Alberta and having Syncrude and Suncor as explicit partners in the redesign at least gives the impression that the table is not balanced," he said.

Education Minister Jeff Johnson said the province wants as much input as possible as it moves forward with changes. The working group model is new, he added, and said the expectation is that school boards in charge of creating draft curriculum would consult with community and business partners.

"We want the economy involved in the education system," Johnson said Tuesday. "If we're going to build a relevant education system, we need the voice of the employer, the business community, economic development - we need those people at the table."

Syncrude is registered to lobby Alberta Education over the next year, but the filing doesn't include any details about their focus within the ministry.

Mark Liguori, assistant superintendent for Edmonton Public Schools, said its curriculum redesign working group consists of traditional stakeholders such as the Alberta Teachers' Association, along with businesses and community organizations.

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- reprinted from the Edmonton Journal

**Region:** Alberta <sup>[2]</sup>

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**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/03/critics-raise-concerns-over-oil-industry-involvement-alberta>

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