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## **Bringing Environmental Law Students Together: the CAELS Conference in Calgary**

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**Conference Commented On:** [Igniting a Spark, Canadian Association of Environmental Law Societies 2015 Conference, Calgary](#)

While many students travelled or relaxed during February's reading week, I was fortunate enough to be a part of a group of second and first year students from the University of Calgary's Environmental Law Society (ELS) who put together the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Canadian Association of Environmental Law Societies (CAELS) Conference. The two-day conference was attended by over 100 delegates from all across Canada and covered a wide array of topics with a focus on energy law.

CAELS is a Canada-wide and student-run association which gives Canadian law students a forum to discuss issues in environmental law. The conference, first held in 2013, is now a major part of this forum. ELS members attended the first two years of the CAELS conference, then held in Ottawa. We were impressed by the quality of the speakers and the discussions at the conference, and started talking about what a Calgary-led CAELS conference could look like. We wanted to bring students excited about environmental, natural resource, and energy law to Calgary to gain exposure to the city's wealth of knowledge in that area. Led by CAELS Coordinator and second year University of Calgary law student Scott Allen, we were able to achieve that goal.

We chose the theme of "Igniting a Spark" for several reasons. First, we wanted to focus on energy law, and felt that the idea of "igniting a spark" would help to capture that idea. Second, we wanted to "ignite a spark" in every delegate.

The conference attracted delegates from across the country, including Fredericton, Victoria, Yellowknife, and everywhere in between. Approximately 70% of these attendees were students and articling students, representing eight different law schools and four non-law schools. The other 30% of delegates came from the Calgary bar, government, industry, members of First Nations, public interest groups, and a variety of other professions. Together, these varied perspectives turned the conference into the stimulating discussion we wanted it to be.

We also had incredible speakers from Alberta and across the country. They spoke on topics such as developing Liquefied Natural Gas in British Columbia, improving the pipeline approval process, assessing the effects of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012*, [SC 2012, c 19, s 52](#), and recognizing the importance of aboriginal consultation. The full program, including information on each speaker, can be found [here](#).

This conference would not have been possible without the help of many. Our sponsors from the Alberta Law Foundation and the Shell Experiential Energy Learning Program provided us with the funds to turn our idea into a successful reality. We also received extensive help from the faculty and staff at the Faculty of Law. Most notably, Assistant Professor Martin Olszynski spent hours helping us brainstorm ideas and organizing logistics, and he participated on two different panels, first as a speaker and then as a moderator. Without his and other faculty members' help, the conference would not have obtained the breadth and depth that it did.

For more information regarding the conference, or to provide feedback about the conference, please email us at [conference@caels.org](mailto:conference@caels.org).

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