

A Student's Experience at Alberta Next: Energy

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On May 21st, the Calgary Chamber of Commerce hosted Alberta Next: Energy, where Premier Danielle Smith and industry leaders discussed Alberta's political and business energy landscape. I was fortunate to be selected for the student table by the Chamber marketing team.

The event began with Premier Smith outlining how her government advocates for Alberta's oil and gas industry at both the provincial and federal levels. As an outsider, I found it to be a quick crash course in the industry's governance, including where it started, its current state, and expectations for the future. The discussion about the Premier's negotiations with the BC Premier and Carney was particularly fascinating and highlighted the complexity and bureaucracy of the energy sector.

Next, a fireside chat with the Premier allowed for candid, industry-backed questions. As a student, I found it interesting to observe the exchange as more niche issues emerged. The Premier's optimism was evident and likely appreciated by attendees. This tone matched the spirit of the event, providing stakeholders with firsthand government insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the current landscape.

After the Premier's fireside chat, the event featured a panel discussion with industry leaders. The corporate panel addressed similar issues to the Premier's, but from the industry's perspective, exploring niche topics valuable to professionals while remaining accessible to students like me. Hearing respected voices in person provided a unique opportunity to absorb and reflect on the information.

The event then ended with a thank-you from the main event sponsor, and networking began. The event gave me the opportunity to meet several great students studying a wide range of areas, from engineering to cybersecurity to, of course, business. The Calgary Chamber of Commerce staff were also lovely, introducing themselves and providing a safe space for the students to get comfortable at the start, then challenge their comfort zones as the event progressed.

As an MBA student, being in that room was a great privilege. Observing senior leaders discuss their industry with passion and rigour offered insights unavailable in a classroom. It was also fun relating the discussion back to my studies. If you told 5-year-old me I'd be getting excited about securing funding and the ultimate goal of maximizing shareholder value, I think he would have run away from that conversation. A lot different from my astronaut ambitions...

In summary, the Chamber organized an excellent event from start to finish, and the staff were fantastic. The panellists and Premier captivated the whole room, and I can't wait to see some of my new student friends at a future Chamber event. If you're a student, there is value here in connecting with like-minded people and getting your foot in the door. If you're an industry professional, it would be smart to get first-hand knowledge on where your industry is headed, and if you just like a good old continental breakfast, it also has that for you.