

VIPIR News

Volumetric and Infrastructure Petroleum Information Registry

Volume 1, Issue 9

April 2000

A REPORT FROM THE VIPIR PROJECT DIRECTOR

by Jim Nichols

Jim Nichols' risk management philosophy is described in the "Thriving on Challenge" article in the March 2000 issue of VIPIR News.

We have just completed a series of risk assessment sessions for the VIPIR project.

Four three-hour sessions were held in Edmonton and four in Calgary. Each set of sessions included representatives from the Ministry of Resource Development and from the oil and gas industry.

A broad cross-section of industry stakeholders was represented, with the exception of the software vendor group. Members of this group may eventually bid on the registry development work. Since they could gain an undue advantage if they were allowed to participate in project working sessions, I will hold separate meetings to identify their issues and concerns.

Two levels of staff participated in VIPIR's risk assessment sessions. One set of sessions was designed for management-level representatives from the ministry and from industry. The second set of sessions was for ministry and industry subject matter experts representing both business and technical areas.

Each group met twice to meet four defined objectives. These were:

1. to identify potential risks that could affect the project;
2. to determine a severity level for each risk;
3. to identify the triggers or symptoms that would indicate the occurrence of each risk; and
4. to identify risk mitigation strategies to counter the potential impact of each risk occurrence.

Each group identified 50 or 60 risks. The fact that 70% to 75% of these were duplicated in the management and the working-level sessions validates their reality. Once the lists from each set of sessions are consolidated, I expect there will be a total of 40 or 50 risks. Preliminary analysis indicates that these fall within several broad categories, including outsourcing, confidentiality of data, security of data, and ongoing

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commitment (for the life of the project) from both the ministry and the industry.

The risk management sessions were well-received and proved a valuable exercise for participants. I've heard some excellent feedback and suggestions that the process be used for other ministry projects.

The information from these sessions is now being assembled and consolidated into a risk management control document. This will provide the basis for the next steps in the risk management process. Next steps include identifying stakeholder risk tolerances; preparing activity duration estimates and cost estimates for each mitigation strategy; and creating a risk management plan.

VIPIR's risk management plan will identify processes for risk response development, risk monitoring, and response control. It will include a SWOT analysis that identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with each risk.

The plan will also define processes and time lines for ongoing risk identification. The VIPIR Advisory Group has recommended that project risks be reviewed every three months. ❖

Coffeehouse Kudos

VIPIR's first coffeehouse session was held in Calgary on March 15. We're happy to report that it was an unqualified success!

The session was arranged by Elaine Mahe, a System Support Production/Revenue Accountant with Numac Energy Inc. Although Elaine is a faithful reader of VIPIR News, she found she wanted more detail than the newsletter was able to provide. When the VIPIR team offered to do coffeehouse sessions, Elaine saw her chance to get her questions answered.

"There has been a lot of interest in VIPIR," says Elaine, "so getting a group together wasn't difficult at all. I just put a call out to the Triangle User Group Issues Subcommittee. The response was unanimous. Everyone wanted to be there."

Did the coffeehouse meet Elaine's expectations?

"It was a good session," she says. "The atmosphere was relaxed, so everyone felt comfortable asking questions. I was impressed to see industry people running the session. It made it clear that VIPIR is not just a government project." ❖

VIPIR Coffeehouse: The ratings speak for themselves!

The following information was drawn from evaluation forms completed by coffeehouse participants. Ten responses were received, but not all respondents answered all the questions. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of responses for that particular question. Thanks to Carol Harke of the VIPIR Project Office for doing the data entry.

All the survey respondents felt that the session met their expectations (9), that the format was suitable (10), and the information was useful (10). All respondents felt the material was at an appropriate level (9). Most (9 of 10) thought the length of the session was appropriate, although one person thought it should have been longer.

Eight of ten respondents rated the session as **very good**, while two people thought it was **excellent**. Best of all, all our participants said they would recommend this type of session to their colleagues.

Of course, there's always a little room for improvement. Session participants suggested that pictures of the process flow would be beneficial, and that future sessions might be more detailed. Another good suggestion was to structure sessions to include participants who were at more or less the same level of knowledge.

Thanks for the feedback, folks!

The next VIPIR coffeehouses are scheduled for Tuesday, May 9 and Wednesday, May 24 from 1:30 to 3:30 PM. To register, please contact the VIPIR Project Office. (See page 8 for contact information.)

PROFILES

Farhat Siddiqui

Business Analyst, VIPIR Business Area Analysis Team

"Being a business analyst requires a sound knowledge of the business," says Farhat Siddiqui, "whether it be gas royalty, oil, mineral tax, or the tenure side of things. You also need a certain degree of familiarity with IT [information technology] applications. Not necessarily a technical knowledge, but familiarity with the terms and the broad, general functions."

Farhat learned a good deal about the business during his seven years with the Department of Resource Development. With a degree in economics from the University of Alberta and course work in resource economics, a job at the DRD was a natural extension.

Farhat started in the DRD's audit group and then moved to operations, where his duties included serving as the team lead on the Gas Royalty Help Desk. He moved on to the Mineral Operations Division's business architecture branch, and then to a secondment to the VIPIR project. He has been on the VIPIR team since the conceptual design phase of the project was launched in July 1999.

What attracted him to the VIPIR project?

"It was an opportunity for personal development," says Farhat. "Business architecture is a project-driven environment, but my focus was only on one portion of the gas business. With VIPIR, I was given a chance to broaden my knowledge through exposure to a larger group of gas stakeholders. And when oil reporting was included, it was even better. There were even more learning opportunities for me."

"We've had to make sure we weren't just looking at our own backyard..."

"VIPIR is all-encompassing," Farhat explains. "We've been looking at the whole picture, with all the stakeholders. It's not just the department or the board, but the whole ministry and industry, working together. We've had to make sure we weren't just looking at our own backyard, but on a wide scope, so that the proposed solution made *everyone* better off."

VIPIR is unique because its scope is so large. That means more time is needed to ensure that details are worked out and everyone is on side.

"The challenge has been to reach consensus," says Farhat. "When our working groups get together, we have involved discussions and brainstorming sessions—sometimes for several days in a row. We hammer out a lot of examples."

Commitment and support have grown as a result of this process. "Various groups have come to personalize the project," says Farhat. "They've come to look at it as 'their

own baby'. It's something they're proud of and they want to make sure it's a good project."

For Farhat, the value of VIPIR is in keeping up with technology and moving with the times.

"VIPIR represents a kind of 'coming of age'," he says. "My role is to ensure that the DRD perspective is represented and that the royalty base remains unchanged in the new, registry-based environment. The inputs and outputs are changed, but not the essence of the royalty rules."

As a business analyst, Farhat takes what's being proposed and ensures that the spirit and intent of the province's legislation and gas royalty regime and guidelines are maintained.

"Business analysts deal with a lot of change management," says Farhat. So do new dads, but not in quite the same way.

Farhat spends his free time with wife Samantha and their five-month-old son, Amaan. Like his old school buddy Jeff Willan (Farhat and Jeff went through junior high, high school and university together), Farhat loves the outdoors and enjoys all sports. He hopes Amaan will share these interests, but he's not quite sure he's ready to be a hockey parent yet.

Maybe tennis would be a better place to start. ❖

Jeff Willan

Business Analyst, VIPIR Business Area Analysis Team

Jeff Willan launched his career in the natural resource sector in 1998, when he accepted a position as an operations analyst in the Gas Royalty Branch of the Department of Resource Development. When the opportunity for a project secondment came up, Jeff jumped at the chance.

The VIPIR project was still known as the Royalty and Related Information Review (RRIR) when Jeff signed on. "I was interested because it seemed like a proactive approach to the resource business," he explains. "It was looking at today's environment and figuring out how to make it better."

Jeff has been with the VIPIR project since May 1999. He started as an analyst on the gas royalty regime team and moved to registry-related work when the project's business area analysis phase was launched in December.

Jeff holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Alberta. "I did a lot of papers, company evaluations, and cost-benefit analyses for my degree," says Jeff. "It was good training for the analytical work I've done on VIPIR."

Jeff's work on the VIPIR project has required extensive research and detailed analyses of the current environment and of possible future scenarios. One of the rewards has been the opportunity to be "right on the front lines."

"We've had to consider other people's visions of the future," Jeff explains, "and look at what was feasible."

PROFILES

Jeff Willan (continued from page 3)

In some cases, this meant thinking up original “future environment” proposals and business rules. “It was exciting to be able to bring in our own ideas and concepts. We could draw conclusions about our own scenarios and make suggestions for how things could work differently. And work better.”

Business area analysis doesn't offer quite as much freedom for new ideas as the conceptual design phase of the project did, but there is still room to “invent in small portions,” says Jeff.

Throughout the process, the challenge has been “learning to come together at the table” and finding solutions that accommodate different stakeholders' points of view. It has been a rewarding experience for Jeff.

“How you see the future can be different from how your

partner across the table sees things. But you're both still working together toward the same goal. You can't be too tunnel-visioned.”

Jeff enjoys being on the front lines in his leisure activities as well as in his work. He loves sports and plays ball hockey, ice hockey and golf. “When I can find the money and the time,” he adds.

A hockey injury has slowed him down a bit lately. His cast is off, but although he's still hobbling, there'll be no time off soon. “Wendy says we have to keep on deadline no matter what!” laughs Jeff. (Wendy Wong is the team lead for VIPIR's business area analysis phase.)

On the upside, a break from hockey has given him more time for his books. Jeff is taking night classes to complete the prerequisites for his CMA (Certified Management Accountant) entrance exam, which he hopes to write in the summer of 2001. “Only three more courses to go!” ❖

Eliza Poon

Model Analyst, VIPIR Business Area Analysis Team

Eliza Poon joined the VIPIR project in December 1999. She was recruited to the business area analysis (BAA) team because of her knowledge, expertise, and 25 years of experience in dealing with statistical data at the EUB.

Eliza graduated from the University of Calgary with a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics. When she was scouting for her first job, she saw a posting for a statistics-related position at the EUB and decided it was “close enough to math” for her to apply.

In her first 20 years at the board, Eliza worked in the accounting area. She was responsible for managing the volumetric data used in publications of oil- and gas-related statistics.

For the last five years, she has worked as a business analyst dedicated to “finding better ways of doing business.” She has considerable experience with ministry-wide initiatives related to data dissemination.

“VIPIR is a good project to be involved with,” says Eliza. “It's a good concept and it should eliminate a lot of redundancies. Streamlining will help both the industry and the ministry function better. *Everyone* will benefit.”

Eliza is a model analyst on VIPIR's BAA team. She works with the team's industry and ministry business representatives and creates sophisticated, **LLOV (logical line of visibility) process diagrams**. (See page 5 for an example.)

“When the BAA team identifies a function,” Eliza explains, “the first step is for the business reps to meet with industry reps to find out about their day-to-day procedures. Everything is documented. The process is repeated for every stakeholder, and at the end of the day, the team has an overall picture of what everyone does. They know the business requirements for every stakeholder who will interact with the shared information registry.”

This is when VIPIR's volumetric analysis team comes in. That's Eliza and her colleagues **Ian Macrae** and **Donna Miles**. Eliza's job is to develop process models. Ian is the team's data model analyst: he identifies all the data elements required and develops data models. Donna develops process models and serves as the project's process model custodian.

The **process model plus the data model plus complete documentation** from the business representatives constitute the package developers will need in order to build the shared information registry. “The work is going very well,” says Eliza. “At first, it was ‘a little bit here, a little bit there.’ But now we're starting to see the pieces fit together. And at the end, once the registry is implemented, I know it will benefit everybody. It's exciting to know I am part of something that will make a difference.”

VIPIR's implementation phase can't come too soon for Eliza and her EUB colleagues. “At the EUB, some of the systems we use for managing volumetric data are very old,” Eliza explains. “In the past, when we've wanted to upgrade, we've been told that the new system on the horizon would fix everything. That's VIPIR—and it's about time.”

Eliza enjoys her work at the EUB and on the VIPIR project. “I enjoy the people I work with,” she says. “And when I'm not working, I enjoy spending time with my family or relaxing and reading a good book.” ❖

PROFILES

Alnoor Karmali

Systems Analyst, VIPIR Business Area Analysis Team

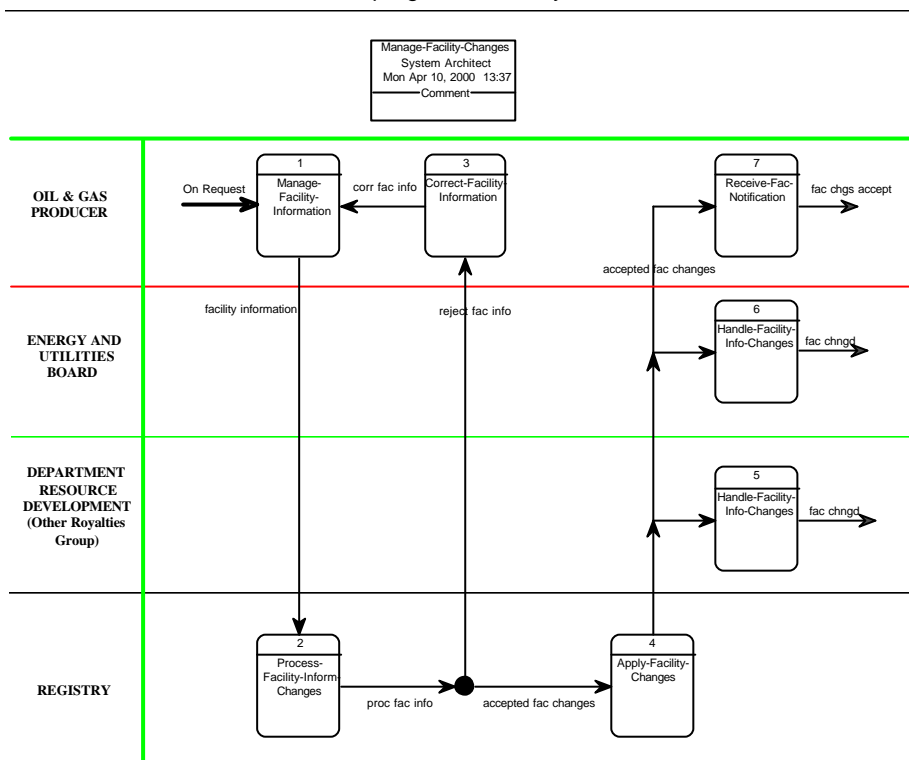
“Education is an opening up of the mind. You can take on any task you think you are capable of doing.” That has been Alnoor Karmali’s dictum since a twist of fate took him from his chosen field to the world of computer programming back in 1978.

Alnoor had just earned a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of London, King’s College. When he couldn’t find an engineering job, he added some courses in computer programming to his repertoire of skills. Eventually, that brought him to Canada, where he was the senior programmer analyst for the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool for seven years. He joined the EUB in

1988, and later headed up the board’s Production Injection and Disposition (PID) project. PID introduced a new way of data reporting that helped eliminate errors and enhance the quality of data used by the EUB, the DRD, and the oil and gas industry.

Alnoor specializes in project leadership. As a computer professional, he has had many opportunities to take management courses to supplement skills gained on the job. He has headed up several major projects for the EUB. He also participated on the Partner Regulatory Information Data Exchange (PRIDE) initiative that was launched in the early 1990s to establish reporting standards for Alberta’s oil and gas industry.

Alnoor’s work on PRIDE made him an ideal candidate for VIPIR’s conceptual design team. “I had a good idea of what was required and what needed to be done,” he explains.



Alnoor was a member of the technical team that worked on VIPIR’s conceptual design phase. He then returned to his regular duties, but it was not long before he was invited to rejoin the VIPIR team for the business area analysis phase.

Alnoor’s expertise in project management and analysis is a great asset to the BAA team. His role is to help with the business analysis work, provide assistance to the various sector heads, and help prepare business data models and process models that deal with petroleum infrastructure.

Alnoor works closely with **Marilyn Davidson** and **Lesley Karpiak** throughout this process. “Here’s how it works,” he explains. “The business analysts discuss various aspects of how the registry will function. They identify processes and describe them in text. Then I chart their words in a pictorial form.”

The figure shown above is a **logical line of visibility (LLOV) diagram** that shows what Alnoor’s work looks like. *(Please keep in mind that the figure represents work in progress and should not be considered the final version. It is included only as an example.)*

This is only one of hundreds of process diagrams that Alnoor and the BAA team will prepare in the current phase of the VIPIR project. “The work has been rewarding,” says Alnoor. “VIPIR is a move in the right direction. It will be good for industry and good for the ministry. Of course, everyone will have to incur some costs, but in the long run, VIPIR will create a better petroleum information management environment for Alberta.”

Alnoor and his wife Shaida have two teenaged children—a son in Grade 12 and a daughter in Grade 9. The whole family is active in volunteering and community work. Three years ago, Alnoor took up running and now he trains every second day. He completed his first 42.2 km marathon in Edmonton last year. This year he plans to run two marathons—one in Calgary and one in Edmonton.

And who knows what the future will bring? Someday we may find him running the Boston Marathon, or perhaps running a project that combines engineering and computer programming. “That would be interesting,” Alnoor says.❖

DATA STANDARDS

by Gary Demofsky and Betty Yeung

The Ministry of Resource Development has launched an information technology (IT) architecture initiative to establish ministry IT standards. The data standards project described here is a part of this initiative that has particular importance for the Volumetric and Infrastructure Petroleum Information Registry. The ministry's network standards and client support standards projects will also have an impact on VIPIR.

Effective information management depends on "everyone speaking the same language"—at least in terms of data standards. Data standards help to ensure "quality" data. This is data that is complete, secure, accurate, and available in a timely manner.

Betty Yeung and **Gary Demofsky** serve on the two-member Data Standards Working Group established by **Lynda Fleming**, Chief Information Officer for the Ministry of Resource Development. (Lynda is also the executive sponsor of the VIPIR project.)

Their mandate is to define and consolidate a common set of data standards that meets the needs of both parts of the ministry—the Department of Resource Development (DRD) and the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB). When it is appropriate, ministry data standards will be compatible with existing industry standards such as the Public Petroleum Data Model (PPDM), the Gas Industry Standards Board (GISB), and others.

ABOUT GISB

The **Gas Industry Standards Board (GISB)** is an independent, nonprofit, North American association whose goal is to "develop and maintain voluntary standards governing electronic communications for...business transaction[s] within the natural gas industry."*

GISB standards are mandatory in the United States and optional in Canada. Since some Canadian pipeline companies have counterparts in the US or deal with US-based shippers, it would simplify communications if companies on both sides of the border used the same standards. The VIPIR project will adopt GISB standards whenever it is appropriate to do so.

**GISB's primary goal as cited on the association's website on April 11, 2000.*
<http://www.gisb.org/view.htm#view>

Data standards deal with many areas, including definitions, formats, and structures. They help define what information is kept and ensure the accuracy and coherence of data. By creating an environment in which data users share a common understanding, standards facilitate the sharing and re-use of data by government and private-sector stakeholders alike. This means that a particular piece of data can be submitted and stored once, rather than multiple times. It eliminates the extra effort required to maintain redundant or outdated data.

Data standards also help ensure that appropriate business rules are captured in models and information systems. For example, although a facility can have only one designated operator at any given time, over a period of time, the same facility may have a number of different operators. Standards help ensure that the data model is based on business rules that capture this reality.

In defining data standards for the ministry, Betty and Gary have researched and synthesized information from several sources in order to determine best practices and make recommendations. The standards they select will be applied to the data models developed for the VIPIR project.

That's why Betty and Gary work closely with VIPIR's BAA team. They have provided guidance and assistance to the team in its work to integrate DRD, EUB, PPDM and GISB data models and standards into the

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VIPIR data model. They also provide data support services to the BAA team and assist with issue resolution, data standardization, and synthesis of data from many sources (the EUB, the DRD, and industry) into a single format that the registry can use.

Betty and Gary will continue to share their findings and make recommendations about best practices for data standards. They will also evaluate the data models and formats proposed by the VIPIR project team and make recommendations with regard to their approval.

"VIPIR deals with very innovative process re-engineering that has the potential to improve the whole production accounting process in the Alberta oil patch," says Gary. "It's a revolutionary concept," adds Betty. "It streamlines the business and leverages today's technology to help create Alberta's business advantage." ❖

ABOUT PPDM

The **Public Petroleum Data Model Association (PPDM)** is an international, nonprofit organization launched in Calgary in 1990. The association's 100+ members include petroleum companies, government agencies, software and application vendors, and service companies. Members worldwide cooperate in the development of "an open standard data model as the foundation for managing information as an essential asset in the global business of oil and gas exploration and production."*

"There have been lots of data standards initiatives in the oil patch," says Gary Demofsky, "but PPDM is one of the few with successful, large-scale applications. Lots of software has been developed for it. It's widely used in Canada and in parts of the United States."

*PPDM's mission statement as cited on the association's website on April 9, 2000.

<http://www.ppdm.org/mission.html>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Betty Yeung joined the Information Services Branch of the Department of Resource Development in 1988 and has worked as a data administrator since 1994. She is an Information Systems Professional (ISP) designated by the Canadian Information Processing Society. Betty holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alberta. While working as lab researcher for a pharmacy professor who was studying hypertension, she also earned a Special Certificate in Computing Science with a major in business applications.

Betty was involved in the development of the owner activity statement (OAS) and in the 1994 initiative to consolidate S reporting. She was also a member of the VIPIR conceptual design team. Her role was to facilitate meetings: she led the group in working through concepts and finding solutions for the registry and associated re-engineering initiatives.

Betty enjoys spending family time with her husband and two boys. She also enjoys beautiful ocean views and camping along the Oregon coast.

Gary Demofsky is a data administrator in the Information Services and Technology Branch of the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. A graduate of Simon Fraser University, Gary holds a Bachelor of Computer Science degree (Honours First Class). He has been with the EUB for 20 years.

Gary has served as the EUB's corporate data architect for 15 years. He helped to oversee the development of the board's world-class, integrated, oil and gas database. He has also been involved in a number of specialized projects, including the EUB's PID (production, injection and disposition) system and various e-commerce initiatives.

Gary was a member of the VIPIR conceptual design team. He chairs the production work group of the Public Petroleum Data Model Association (PPDM) and is a member of PPDM's modelling committee. In his spare time ("What spare time?" he says!), Gary enjoys skiing and science fiction.

READERS' FORUM

Do you have a question about the VIPIR project? Do you have a viewpoint you would like to share with our readers? Is there anything you would like us to feature in *VIPIR News*? Send your comments and questions to the VIPIR Project Office and we'll do our best to respond in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

Letters to the editor are also welcome. Space considerations may limit the number of submissions we can print.

Submissions to *VIPIR News* must be signed and should not exceed 250 words. We reserve the right to edit all materials. ❖

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ALBERTA MINISTRY OF RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

ALBERTA ENERGY AND UTILITIES BOARD (EUB)
DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DRD)
IN COOPERATION WITH INDUSTRY PARTNERS.

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Canadian Association of Petroleum Production Accounting
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Special thanks to Sharron Baker, Marilyn Davidson, Carol Harke, Nabat Kassam, Tracey Maskell, Nadyne Shafe, and Salim Sumar for your help with distribution, and to Gary Demofsky, Alnoor Karmali, Elaine Mahe, Eliza Poon, Farhat Siddiqui, Jeff Willan, and Betty Yeung for your help with the copy.

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acknowledgement.

BAA Updates

by David Breakwell

VIPIR's business area analysis (BAA) phase continues on track. The first iteration will be completed by the end of April. A second iteration has been scheduled as an intensive, week-long session in early May.

Studies on application development projects indicate that 70% of business requirements are typically captured during the first pass in a BAA. Seventy per cent of the remaining 30% are identified in the course of a second review, bringing the total to 91%. Since the VIPIR project deals with improving existing information flows rather than creating a new application, we expect to identify close to 98% of the business requirements during the second pass.

The second iteration of VIPIR's detailed business requirements will be conducted by individuals who can bring "a fresh set of eyes" to the process. Since these individuals have not been involved in the initial analysis work, they will have no preconceptions and will be in a good position to identify any missing pieces. The VIPIR Advisory Group has helped to identify industry and ministry staff resources to participate in this exercise.

The updated, second-iteration BAA report will be sent out to a wider stakeholder audience for feedback in the second week of May. Once this final review is complete, the BAA document should include sufficient detail to enable private sector companies to propose (and adhere to) fixed price bids for the development of the registry. We anticipate that a Request for Proposals will be issued in the first week of June. ❖

COMING UP

April 25. VIPIR's Eileen Dickson, Ann Hagedorn and Joanne Quirk-Williams will be available to answer VIPIR-related questions at the monthly luncheon of the **Canadian Association of Petroleum Production Accounting**. Stop by their table.

April 26. The VIPIR team is presenting a session at the "**Will E&P Survive ebusiness?**" management seminar sponsored by DMR Consulting, Cisco Systems, and Ernst & Young. For registration details, please see <http://www.hourgroup.com/e-energy/> ❖

NAME THAT GROUP

The registry advisory group adopted the name **VIPIR Advisory Group** (VAG for short) at its April 5 meeting. ❖