

Volume 26
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INSIDE THIS EDITION

Home

What just happened?

MLA Nally sworn in as associate minister of electricity

Women+Power provides new forum for industry professionals

Government accepts AESO advice on market power framework

AESO maps out action for DERs, energy storage, tariff design

Stakeholder processes focus on pricing and sub-hourly settlement

Industry roundup

NEWSLETTER

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Women+Power provides new forum for industry professionals

Up until now, Alberta’s electricity sector has lacked an industry-wide networking group for women professionals. Sharleen Gatcha hopes to change that with Women+Power, a new group she founded in 2019.

“As women professionals, we don’t have many opportunities within the industry to connect. We want to help address that,” says Gatcha, director of operations at the Balancing Pool and CEO of the new group, which is expecting to be incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in May 2020.

According to Gatcha, Women+Power will provide a forum for women professionals to connect with each other, exchange ideas, educate and mentor each other and provide other exciting opportunities related to the industry. Another goal will be to support the inclusion of more women in the industry, where women make up just a quarter of the workforce.

“To keep pace with demands in the industry, organizations need to encourage more diversity in the workplace. A group like this can help by offering women an opportunity to support each other in their careers,” says Gatcha, a Calgary executive who’s worked in the energy sector more than 25 years.

Gatcha says she originally got the idea for Women+Power from her experience over four years ago working in the oil patch at Statoil (now Equinor), where she got the chance to attend women’s networking events like Women in Energy.

“When I came back to the power business, I realized something was missing. Different companies are trying to fill the gap on their own, but I saw the value of having an industry-wide group that can bring women together to network and share our experiences,” she says.

After an initial meeting last November to gauge interest, Gatcha says Women+Power started to take shape. In January, Gatcha and other local women leaders held a strategy session to create the groundwork for the new group. Out of that discussion, a 13-member board was formed. The local office of legal firm DLA Piper (Canada) and other industry organizations stepped forward as sponsors. IPPSA also committed to promote the new group at its functions.

“IPPSA is pleased to support Women+Power as the Society knows full well the value of diverse voices and the richness that this brings. That’s the nature of IPPSA. We wish to support Women+Power to build upon our industry’s unique history featuring so many women in leadership roles,” says Evan Bahry, IPPSA’s executive director.



Sharleen Gatcha

Originally, Gatcha and the others planned to officially launch Women+Power at a meet-and-greet at the March IPPSA conference. But then COVID-19 intervened, cancelling these plans. Since then, the group has kept up regular communications through Zoom. They're getting the group's policies in place. They're also discussing a set of programs that could include networking events, guest speakers and mentorship opportunities.

"Members will be able to access news, insights and resources geared to support them in the industry," Gatcha says.

One of their top priorities in the coming weeks will be to launch the group's official website www.womenpower.ca to promote member registrations. Memberships will be free in this registration drive to encourage as many members to join as possible.

"Feedback from both men and women in the power industry has been overwhelmingly positive. Women+Power is looking forward to developing opportunities, resources and programs that will support women and enable them to excel in their careers," Gatcha says.

Editor's note: To learn more about Women+Power, contact Sharleen Gatcha on LinkedIn or watch for the launch of www.womenpower.ca in May.