Heather Stephens
Chief Operating Officer, Emissions Reduction Alberta

Heather is a committed leader in Alberta’s energy transition. She was a founding member of Emissions Reduction Alberta, a provincial government agency tasked with overseeing the province’s emissions cuts. Her first role was managing the new organization’s finances while helping it grow, and she is now its director, spearheading the agency’s $55-million Energy Savings for Business initiative and overseeing its dispersement of $280 million in pandemic recovery spending on new sustainability efforts. Heather is also an outspoken advocate for women in the workplace and serves as executive lead on ERA’s strategy for the development of an inclusive culture that is relevant and accessible to Alberta’s diverse populations.

Why is the energy transition important to you?
I want to be certain our kids will be proud of the future we’re creating. To get where we need to go, we need to show leadership by being open, transparent, and authentic. When we play to our strengths and work together, progress is possible. Ultimately, success will come from convening groups of individuals and organizations to develop innovative approaches by looking at existing ideas in new and creative ways. With smart investment, sound policy, and promising technologies, we can be certain that the world our children need, the one the world is demanding, will come to be.

“The world needs energy, and we must do all we can to make that energy future friendly. Generations to come are relying on us to be relentless and resourceful, innovative and ingenious, to tackle the biggest hurdle of this century.”

What are the key challenges you’ve faced in your career, and what are your thoughts on their solutions?
As a career-driven parent, it can be challenging to strike the right balance of focus for your personal and professional life at various stages of your children’s lives. I was fortunate to have male mentors and leaders that understood the value that I brought to the team, even if it meant that they would get less than a full-time equivalent of me for a period of my career. Having a diverse array of female leaders telling their personal stories is
important for our future female leaders, so that they can understand that career progressions aren’t always linear. While I have been fortunate to have exceptional male mentors and leaders, I have had a 25-year career with a lack of female mentors. Having opportunities to gather women together to share stories, exchange ideas and feel supported by a cohort of capable and passionate women in the workforce can be very powerful.

**What does a successful energy transition look like to you?**
I firmly believe that a successful transition will leave us healthier, stronger and more resilient than we are today. A successful transition will have an engaged, innovative and diverse workforce. It will include a wide array of technology solutions—some that already exist and ones we haven’t yet thought of. To support this, companies will have embedded a culture of sustainability and innovation into their organizations—into policies, processes, governance, and decision-making. It will focus on building vibrant communities while at the same time leveraging learnings and knowledge from the globe so that we can move at the pace required to get to net zero. And most importantly, it will have left no individual or jurisdiction behind, so that we do not have the disproportionate impact of climate change affecting those who have had the least contribution to its existence.

**What book is on your nightstand?**
A giant stack! Currently reading *Apeirogon* by Colum McCann, and next up is *Maps of our Spectacular Bodies* by Maddie Mortimer and *Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Anthony Doerr.

**What is the proudest accomplishment of your life?**
It has to be the gift of raising my two daughters to be independent, capable and empathetic women.

**If you were granted one wish to make the world a better place, what would it be?**
Equal access to opportunity, whatever that may look like for the individual, regardless of personal characteristics or circumstances.

**Describe the future of energy in one word.**
Adaptable.