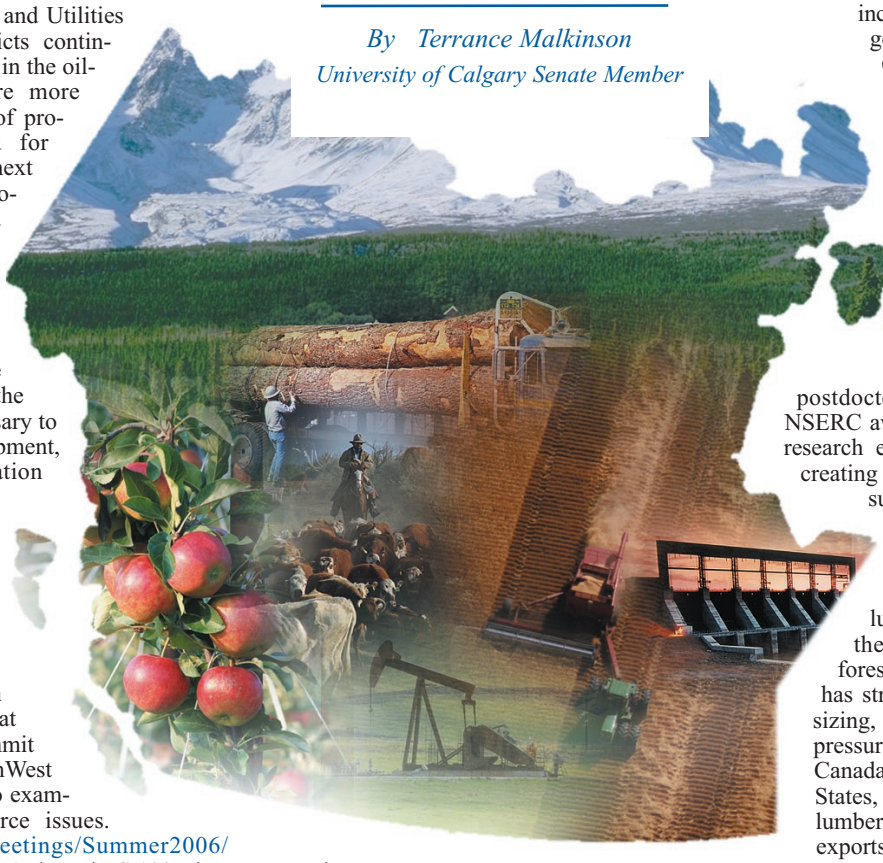
A View from the West

By Terrance Malkinson
University of Calgary Senate Member



- The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) predicts continued massive growth in the oilsands sector, where more than $100B worth of projects is scheduled for construction in the next decade. Oilsands production is expected to triple in the next 10 years to three million barrels a day. Concerns however have been expressed on the need to improve the infrastructure necessary to support the development, improve transportation to the area, and ecological issues associated with oilsands development.

- More than 500 people met in Edmonton (Alberta) in July at the 16th annual summit of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region to examine energy workforce issues. http://pnwer.org/meetings/Summer2006/06%20Summit.htm. At least $US 100B in energy projects are projected over the next ten years to meet the unprecedented growth in the regions energy sector to accommodate rises in power demand. The projects will require a huge workforce. Indeed a looming labour shortfall in many business sectors is of concern to industry leaders.

- Enmax Energy Corporation and its partners have been chosen by BC Hydro to develop four "green" energy generation projects that will come on-steam over the next three years. Two of the projects are run-of-river hydro plants of 10 megawatts each and the remaining two projects will generate clean electricity using waste heat recovered from gas compressor stations.

- WestLink Innovation Network Ltd (http://www.westlink.ca/) is a university-based network for coordinating activities, bundling technologies and sharing information between its members. One of the strategies offered by WestLink is its technology commercialization internship program (TCIP) that specializes in developing Canada's future technology commercialization leaders. They help develop people who know technology but who also know management and have entrepreneurial skills.

- Industry Canada's office of consumer affairs in Ottawa recently released a 90-page guide which offers step-by-step information on how to adopt Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). "Corporate Social Responsibility: An Implementation Guide for Canadian Business"(http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/incsr-rse.nsf/en/Home). CSR is generally understood to be the way an organization achieves a balance or integration of economic, environmental, and social imperatives while addressing shareholder and stakeholder expectations. Corporate social responsibility is a concept that is increasingly being incorporated into good business practice within Canada and globally.

- The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (www.nserc.gc.ca) recently announced 475 new grants worth $56.7M and 922 scholarships worth $15.9M in the prairie provinces. NSERC supports over 22,000 university students and postdoctoral fellows in their studies. NSERC awards are building a world-class research environment throughout Canada creating the skilled workforce needed to sustain economic growth and job creation.

- It is hoped that the softwood lumber deal between Canada and the US will help revitalize the forestry industry which for 20 years has struggled through closures, downsizing, globalization, and many other pressures. Softwood lumber is one of Canada's largest exports to the United States, with 21.5 billion board feet of lumber shipped in 2005 alone. Those exports were worth $8.5B. This trade matters to both Canadians and Americans. Canada's forestry sector employs approximately 280,000 Canadians, and roughly 300 communities are dependent upon the forestry sector. US lumber producers cannot meet domestic demand for softwood lumber. Canada now supplies over a third of the United States' consumption of this product.

- Alberta-based SemBioSys Genetics Inc. (www.sembiosys.com) a biotechnology company focused on the development, commercialization, and production of biopharmaceuticals and non-pharmaceutical products based on its proprietary technologies recently received is 20th US patent. SemBioSys' management and scientific team members are active contributors to the plant-made pharmaceutical scientific community and have been at the forefront of developing regulations for the production of pharmaceutical producing plants, working with the USDA, the FDA and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

About the Author

Terrance Malkinson is a proposal manager/documentation specialist, an elected Senator of the University of Calgary, a Governor of the Engineering Management Society, international correspondent for IEEE-USA Today's Engineer Online, editor-in-chief of IEEE-USA Today's Engineer Digest, and editor of IEEE Engineering Management. The author is grateful to the Haskayne School of Business Library at the University of Calgary. He can be reached at malkinst@telus.net .