

## Alberni Energy Tour – March 2015

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce presented an offer to its Canada Wide Membership early this year whereby up to 10 Chamber Executives could take part in a tour of the Alberni Oil Sands north of Fort McMurray, Alberta. In addition to the tour itself they also granted the recipients with an opportunity to listen to many guest speakers at a function in Calgary so that we could understand the scope of the visit to the Oil Sands.

I was very fortunate to receive one of the 10 bursaries to visit the area and today I'd like to summarize some of my thoughts for our Membership. As well, I'll be presenting further summaries at coming Rotary Meetings in Port Alberni and I'll also show some slides at our June Dinner Meeting.

During the presentations it became very clear to me that we should, as the business community of the Alberni Valley, support the views and objectives of the Canadian Manufacturers involved in these projects. While many consider the oil sands to be a 'negative' for Canada and Alberta we in fact should be looking at the bigger picture recognizing that our Natural Resources, including those close to home, are important for the overall economic health of the Country.

Over the two days the 10 of us involved in the tour, representing Chambers of Commerce from St. John's, Moncton, Fredericton, Strait Area Chamber of Nova Scotia, Bellevue Ont., Cambridge Ont., Newmarket Ont., and Kelowna BC were introduced to representatives from at least 12 organizations involved in the Oil and Gas Industry. What stood out for me through these introductions and presentations was that each organization clearly has an Environmental focus as a prime consideration in their everyday operations. In fact, some statistics were shared with us that clearly paint a picture of credibility and commitment on behalf of the entire industry. One such statistic shows that over the course of 12 years between the early 90's and 2012 the GHG emissions per barrel of oil produced have dropped by at least 28%. And, they also comment that they aren't yet satisfied with where things are at; as they're working hard to further reduce the emissions.

It is also evident and confirmed that organizations who are in fact competitors are also working closely together in the Environmental side of the business. Collectively they all realize that collaboration is critical to the ongoing success of the industry.

One of the key focuses of the trip was to introduce the group of us to the issue of Pipelines as they criss-cross the lands of Canada. We were provided with information and presentations on this side of the industry whereby they summarized the overwhelming benefits of Pipeline transportation of oil vs. other means that are used today. The safety record, while not perfect, is most impressive in just how close to 100% it actually is. Add to that the systems in place to pre-determine potential risks along pipelines via 'MRI' type equipment monitoring all lines in place it seems logical that we should be supporting the Pipeline Industry over other current methods of oil transport over our lands.

Canada needs to export our oil to Asia and other markets and we need to do so in a safe and environmentally sound manner. We need to continue with strict guidelines so that we can help lead the rest of the world vs. allowing others to lead with less stringent methods.

We also need to understand that oil is a basic necessity of today's world. It is used directly in many areas most notably the transportation industry for goods and people but also in less obvious product development such as plastics, clothing, footwear, computers, etc. In fact, within your arm's reach right now are products derived from oil.

Another area of concentration for us during our visit was with respect to manufacturing for the industry. The growth potential for Canadian Manufacturers is alarming. While the industry will almost certainly always rely on International Companies for some specific products there is ample opportunity for the Canadian Marketplace to jump on board. The flip side to the opportunity of the future is that today more than 600 BC Companies are already involved in the industry in Alberta and more than 2000 companies are involved – Canada Wide, through every Province.

Employment opportunities continue to exist and will grow from today's numbers of ~ 150,000 direct jobs to well over 225,000 within the next 20 years. Add to those numbers the indirect jobs and one can see how important the industry is to the Canadian Economy even beyond Alberta.

Overall the trip to Calgary and Fort McMurray was a wonderful experience for me personally and hopefully for our Business Community as I begin to share the word. For those of you who are wondering about sustainability, environmental impact, the future of oil or for that matter the future of our forest industry then please visit me at the Chamber of Commerce where I can show you some of the many presentation summaries I received over the course of the two days. Please remember that today we operate differently than we did in the past in every aspect of our daily lives. These industries are moving quickly towards the end goal of a perfect record. In fact, they're doing so at an alarming and amazing pace that we should all be proud of. I leave you with one thought that jumped out at me.

In the mid and early 60's when Pipelines were being built across our lands we were driving state of the art cars and trucks including Ramblers, Falcons, Fury's and Toronado's all of which we thought we wonderful; and they were. Today we drive cars and trucks that leave far less environmental footprint, cars that are infinitely safer and far more reliable than ever in the past. Our industry leaders are moving at lightning speed as they too develop the entire resource industry with technology aimed at improving the lives of all of us.

Bill Collette

Executive Director Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce