



If you're are having difficulty viewing this newsletter, [please click here](#).

Oil Sands Update

Energy From Athabasca

April 2009

In this issue...

The image many people have of the oil sands and Fort McMurray is based on pictures taken from a distance. Journalists who briefly visit tend to project an image of our industry and community through a lens of issues and challenges.

What gets missed through this view is a sense of everyday life and the positive approach we take in building our neighbourhoods, one day at a time. Those who live and work in Fort McMurray and the Wood Buffalo Region share a unique perspective. This includes our trials and tribulations in commuting or lining up for a coffee but it also includes the pride we feel in our extraordinary charitable efforts or how we each give back in our own way to the place we call home. Yes, Fort McMurray has doubled its population over the last 10 years and while it might be easy to talk about the challenges this has brought, it is also worth recognizing our efforts in addressing these challenges.

Our community faces difficulties like any other. Some are different or unique given our location, resources and the nature of what we are trying to accomplish. Currently, we are adapting to the economic slowdown that has occurred so quickly and dramatically around the world. This is a difficulty shared by everyone.

In this issue

- [In this issue...](#)
- [Taking the real Fort McMurray story on the road](#)
- [Unearthing ancient history](#)
- [Diversity at work](#)
- [Fort McMurray – a United Way leader](#)
- [Focus on transportation in communities remains a high priority](#)

Quick Facts:

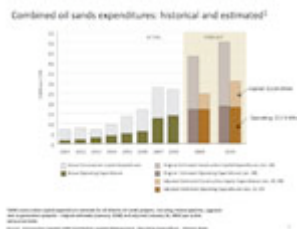
Did you know more than 320,000 artifacts have been found in the Athabasca area, including a spear point containing mammoth blood? Many tools date back almost 10,000 years.

Recent media coverage:

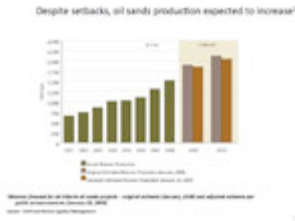
Fable of the 2-jawed fish; letter to the editor by Don Thompson



www.edmontonjournal.com/Business/Fable+jawed+fish/



The future remains bright for our community, though. As always, OSDG continues to track oil sands development.



Taking into consideration the project delays and deferrals announced by oil sands developers, our findings still show that oil sands production will continue to grow. We estimate \$25 billion will be spent on constructing new projects and operating existing ones in 2009. In 2010, we are forecasting another \$30 billion which is double the total amount spent in 2006. While this is lower than what our surveys told us last year, even with recent announcements, spending on the oil sands will continue at “megaproject” levels for many years into the future.

Our community continues to have a good story to tell and you will see that reflected in this issue and editions to come. I encourage you to share these stories in conversation with friends and family. Positive word of mouth remains one of the most powerful forms of communication and it will continue to serve our community well.

Jacob Irving
Executive Director
Oil Sands Developers Group

[1396916/story.html](#)

Pass it on

If you know someone who may be interested in receiving this newsletter, you can easily [forward up to five copies](#) at once.

Taking the real Fort McMurray story on the road

The Big Spirit campaign is all about unbridled, unapologetic civic pride.

This year, the message that the Wood Buffalo Region is a terrific place to live and work will be taken to the rest of the province.

“We’re supporting the Big Spirit campaign because we recognize that we have to communicate what a great community and lifestyle we offer up here in our recruitment efforts,” says Brenda Erskine, a spokeswoman with Suncor. “It’s time to dispel the myths and show people what a wonderful place this really is.”

"The campaign will kick off its provincial launch at Travel Alberta's Rural Routes show this spring in Calgary," says Andrew Stuckey, a spokesman and campaign promoter with the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

"We'll be there passing out little squeeze buffalo – a proven crowd-pleaser – and answering questions about the region and life for the people who live here," says Stuckey.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo's parade float will travel to a number of different communities this year, and Big Spirit will be well-represented at trade fairs and exhibitions province-wide. Industry partners will also be taking the message with them on the road as they attend job fairs and other events.

"We're really excited to be working with partners in industry, because we believe that to be really effective, we're going to have to take this message to people together," says Stuckey.

Albian Sands was one of the founding members of the program in 2007, and Suncor signed on last year.

Links

- www.bigspirit.ca
- www.woodbuffalo.ab.ca
- www.suncor.com
- www.albiansands.com
- www1.travelalberta.com

Unearthing ancient history

Sometimes in the search for oil, something else turns up.

Sea monsters.

Monster may not be the scientific moniker for these prehistoric aquatic animals, but large, dinosaur-era animal remains have been unearthed in the oil sands.



When you start moving around massive amounts of soil and rock in a unique geological area, it's not all that unlikely

that some paleontological and archaeological wonders are going to be exposed.

“Portions of our mine site were, in fact, once oceanic settings and provided habitat for marine reptiles such as plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs,” says Don Thompson, manager, external and regulatory affairs at Syncrude. “As a result of the incredibly sharp eyes of our shovel operators, several notable discoveries have been made.”

In 1994, for example, plesiosaur remains were discovered during routine operations of a 100-ton electric shovel in Syncrude’s mine.

It was one of the most complete plesiosaur finds recovered in North America, and it is now on display at the Royal Tyrrel Museum.

“It’s remarkable these guys saw something and took the time to stop operations and took such care to preserve what they found,” says Patrick Druckenmiller, a curator of earth sciences at the University of Alaska Museum who has studied the find. “There aren’t too many finds anywhere in the world during active quarrying, especially when using such enormous equipment.”

Important archaeological discoveries have also been made in the region.

The area is home to the highest density of pre-contact archaeological sites in Alberta, and one of the highest in North America.

Archaeologists working for Birch Mountain Resources Ltd. discovered a site, now named the Quarry of the Ancestors, where ancient people extracted rock to make spear points. It is the oldest quarry in the province, and the company is working to protect a significant portion of the area as well.

Links

- www.tyrrellmuseum.com

Diversity at work

It is a windowless room with many views.

Syncrude’s quiet room is a place for peaceful meditation and prayer



for people of all faiths
and backgrounds.



It is a particularly invaluable resource, however, for people practicing the Islamic faith who wish to fulfill daily prayer requirements.

“It’s open to everyone on-site who would like five or 10 minutes in a quiet place,” says Wajeehullah Arain, a process engineer with Syncrude and one of the initiators of the project.

He says the project was approved within a day of approaching the company’s diversity coordinator.

Syncrude is not the only employer in the oil sands to provide this resource, and many industry employers have made great efforts to support cultural diversity in a region where people from more than 70 different countries have made their home.

DiversityInc, an American magazine that annually reports on the Top 50 Companies that support diversity, found that just 16 per cent of the companies it follows feature special religious accommodations, so the oil sands industry certainly seems to be a leader in this regard.

Suncor Energy Inc. was among 25 Canadian companies to be recognized on the inaugural list of Canada’s Best Diversity Employers in 2008. The company offers courses in conversational English on-site as well as winter driving training.

It was also a pioneer of the “We Love the Winters Here” educational presentations that review topics such as home heating, dressing for the winter and winter car care.

Links

- www.syncrude.ca
- www.suncor.com
- www.mcaonline.ca
(Multicultural Association of Fort McMurray)
- www.diversityinc.com

Fort McMurray – a United Way leader

There is a will to support the United Way in Fort McMurray, so it is no surprise that oil sands developers and their employees invest millions in the organization each year.

Last year, the United Way’s annual campaign raised more

than \$4 million for the community, and thanks to corporate contributions and the donations and fundraising efforts of individual employees, those involved in the oil sands industry raised more than two-thirds of that sum.

Suncor's oil sands facility in Fort McMurray raised close to \$1.28 million, and Syncrude contributed about \$1.23 million.

Each year, everyone works just a little bit harder to give more.

For example, contributions from Albian Sands more than doubled between 2006 and 2008, and the number of Syncrude employees who donated \$1,000 or more quadrupled from 2007, with the average employee donation climbing by about 33 per cent.

All the funds raised in the community campaign will go to the 24 agencies and 38 programs supported by the United Way.

"Each year, I'm overwhelmed by the support of the community, not only in terms of monetary donations, but also in regards to the contributions of time and talent," says Anita Semple, president of the United Way of Fort McMurray and learning and development manager at Albian Sands.

In the past, Fort McMurray has led the country in giving to the United Way on a per capita basis.

Links

- www.fmunityway.com
- www.suncor.com
- www.syncrude.ca
- www.albiansands.com

Focus on transportation in communities remains a high priority

Transportation tangles and tie-ups might leave some motorists asking, "Are we there yet?"

The answer is no, but we are well on our way.

"We're really focusing



on moving ahead with projects like the Athabasca Bridge construction and the Thickwood Boulevard and Confederation Way interchanges,” says Heather Kaszuba, a spokeswoman for Alberta Transportation. “These are projects that will ease congestion and improve safety in the area.”



Initial grading for the interchanges began last summer and will resume this spring after the frost lifts. Kaszuba says at the moment, work is focused on the utility relocation

“The remaining grading work, paving, and interchange structures will be the next part of the project to be tendered,” she says. “At which time the full project cost and completion timelines will be available.”

She says construction of the new five-lane bridge across the Athabasca is on schedule and should open in 2011.

Last year, work focused on constructing three piers on the northwest side of the river, and this year three piers will be built on the southeast side.

“We have also started the fabrication of the steel girders that will span across the river and will be assembling some of those steel girders later this year,” says Kaszuba. Next year, the remaining girders will be assembled and the concrete bridge deck will be poured.

This May, other transportation solutions will be explored for the region at a transportation summit hosted by the Van Horne Institute.

“We will be bringing industry together with stakeholders to learn about cutting-edge transportation alternatives available from solutions providers from all over the world,” says Sarah Ingram, programs manager with the institute.

The summit will be held May 13 at the Delta Edmonton Centre Suite Hotel.

Links

- <http://vanhorne.info/Events>
- www.transportation.alberta.ca

Visit our website: www.oilsandsdevelopers.ca

©2009 The Oil Sands Developers Group is important in addressing the need for accurate, credible information about Athabasca oil sands activity. On behalf of our members, we work closely with oil sands operators and developers, related industries, government, Aboriginal peoples, and other organizations active in the Athabasca region. Through communication and collaboration, we help define and address regional issues related to oil sands development.

You may unsubscribe from this email by [clicking here](#)