



PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT – 2010

What a year! At no time since the formation of the Alberta Council of Technologies (ABCtech) have we witnessed such progress in our mission and improved clarity in our vision. Remember, we are a Society of volunteers: no staff, no grants. Let me summarize the highlights and then conclude with a sobering insight and challenge.

Our mission - extraordinary progress! Demystifying and advancing the commercialization of emerging technologies.

Stem-cell Therapeutics. In June we launched the year with two forums in Edmonton and Calgary, co-hosted with the Alberta Health Industry Association. The forums were conducted at the Alberta Research Centres featuring presentations on the status of Stem-cell Therapeutics by Drs. Martin Ferguson-Pell and Sam Weiss, respectively. The response panels of investors, researchers, ethicists, entrepreneurs and policy makers were illuminating, as were the probing questions from the audiences of over 100.

We followed the forums up with symposia in November, using a similar format in more public spaces - the Central Lions Seniors' Centre in Edmonton and the Kirby Centre in Calgary. The sessions co-hosted with BioAlberta entitled "From the Lab to the Bedside" attracted over 450 and served to clarify the nature of stem-cell therapy, the ethical issues and challenges of commercialization. As a follow-on, ABCtech is serving as a secretariat to Cell-therapies Public Education Advisories established in Edmonton and Calgary, chaired by Dr. Ernst Bergmann and Dr. Derrick Rancourt.

Environment and Clean-technologies. In March ABCtech co-hosted with the Alberta Chapter - Canadian Green Building Council - two clean-tech symposia in Edmonton and Calgary, attended by over 450. The events featured both a keynote by Rampart-Avenir on their proposed \$1.8B clean-tech community plus 10 sector panels. The panels generated resolutions for advancing the adoption of clean-technologies. The event prompted additional resolutions recognizing a binding industry value, "a new-found respect for the environment" and a recommendation to form the Alberta Clean-tech Industry Alliance for executing the resolutions. The resolutions will be the subject of ABCtech's September's Clean-tech Convention at Red Deer College, preceded by clean-tech educational workshops in Lacombe.

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. In early June the ICT Council and ABCtech co-hosted a forum on artificial intelligence (AI) "Off-loading Intelligence - When Machines Decide," featuring a keynote by Dr. Jonathan Schaeffer. The panel and audience Q&A served to elevate the economic relevance of AI and its pervasive impact of society. The forum has set the foundation for symposia to be conducted in November in Calgary and in Edmonton co-located with CIPS Alberta's ICE conference.

Communications and Networking. Central to our capacity to contact and educate, market and network is our communications infrastructure. We have achieved stability in the maintenance of: 1) our website profiling events, ABCtech and emerging technologies and supporting marketing, registration and payment processes so essential for event management; 2) access to media through media releases via Troy Media; and 3) volunteers and sponsors who help maintain our website and coordinate, finance and market our events. And this year we added the web casts as a communication application.

A Society of members or subscribers? At a strategic planning meeting in January at Old College, the ABCtech Board concluded that ABCtech's strength as a Society stemmed from the growth of its Newsletter subscriber list - which now numbers over 5250, and the associated power of

social/business networking through its events and affiliates. It was recommended that ABCtech transition from a member-based to a subscriber-based Society.

Director-led Portfolios. The structure of the Board and its focus has gradually evolved such that we now have representatives for: Finance, Research, Diversification, Clean-tech, Energy, Artificial Intelligence, Knowledge Management, ICT and Bio-tech plus Directors of Regional relations in Northern and Southern Alberta with Observers from ECAT and CCAT.

ABCtech has clearly extended its reach and its depth as a contributor to demystifying and advancing the commercialization of technology.

But...have we contributed to diversification? This is a fundamental question, as it is the focus of our vision. In the interest of clarity, we have asked the Western Canadian Centre for Economic Research to help us define diversification, its history as a policy in Alberta and to help us develop the associated monitoring metrics.

Dr. Jason Brisbois will be speaking to the Centre's findings shortly. But before he does, let me share with you some of my concerns and insight. First, any measure of economic diversification must take into consideration the inherent basis of Alberta's economy - carbon commodities: Agriculture - meat and wheat; Forestry - pulp and timber; Energy - oil and gas, hydro-carbons. Since the middle of the last century Alberta's economy has become more concentrated on energy. First, the proportion of the annual GDP generated from the sale of energy commodities far exceeds that from any other sources. Second, the proportion of revenues derived from the processing of these commodities is lowest for energy than for agriculture and forestry. Finally, the destination of exports has increased to the United States and decreased for the rest of Canada and the world.

Why and so what? The "Why?" is easy, because that is what Alberta's markets want - raw, unprocessed carbon. And in a market-driven economy, distance from market - that is, transportation and labor costs - are key considerations in the economics of where to locate processing plants. Thus, we are what we are because of costs and that's what the buyers want.

What are the implications of a concentrated economy? Well, for over half-a-century Alberta has been proclaiming that "...it is time to diversify." Clearly, our natural advantages are impeding diversification, but have contributed to the financing of an extensive array of public services in education, health and government. What is wrong? "Nothing," as long as the status quo prevails. But should the market change: 1) should carbon become unpopular; 2) should regulations change; and/or 3) should alternative energy sources such as fusion emerge, then an economy AND services concentrated on extracting/harvesting and transporting raw carbon is at peril.

Our challenge is to elevate the relevance of diversification to Alberta for today and tomorrow, by demonstrating the economic, environmental and community-building consequences of emerging technologies. A knowledge-based economy knows no borders and is sustainable after carbon. You are Alberta's sustainability insurance.

Good luck and prosperity to you all.