

Looking North



to Syncrude's World Class Oil Sands Operation



Oil sands are dug off in the distance using large shovel machines and taken to a crusher by truck (see left). Some of the oil sands are taken to a conveyer belt and mixed with warm water and sent via pipeline for processing nearby. Two shovels were working at this Mildred Lake operation when this picture was taken. Syncrude employs 5,000 people with 100 at an Edmonton research office and 100 at an office in Calgary. The company moves 4,000 people in and out of this site daily plus other Syncrude workers at its Aurora site.

This massive truck holds 400 tonnes of raw sand full of oil that will be taken out of it and sold for consumption across North America. Syncrude Canada at this Mildred Lake operation north of Ft. McMurray

and at its Aurora Aurora mining operation 35 km north have total of over 100 similar trucks (some smaller than this) operating around the clock. Each rubber tire costs approximately \$60,000 to replace.



Alberta MLA Ray Danyluk, Minister of Infrastructure (left) told reporters at a luncheon hosted by the City of Lac La Biche on June 28 that if it were not for energy royalties alone—the province would have a 15 percent sales tax. Alberta he said transfers \$21.5 billion to the federal government every year. “We (Alberta) do a lot.” He added that “It’s hard to get the message out (that) what we are doing is major.” Danyluk added that “Alberta is very much ahead of other areas (environmentally)” and said that we “need to recognize that the world is fueled by petrochemicals”. He also spoke of the environmental disturbance, “but behind that comes reclamation (of the land)”. The MLA said that others don’t want to see Alberta succeed because that means other projects elsewhere won’t go ahead. “We have to communicate . . . we have to be proud. I have three rules: communicate, communicate, communicate.” Before his talk was over he referred to the recent court case where Syncrude was charged after ducks died in tailing ponds saying that “It wasn’t their (Syncrude’s) fault, per se.” Syncrude’s media relations advisor, Cheryl Robb who was in the room however immediately said that Syncrude admits it was a mistake. “We learned a lot.”

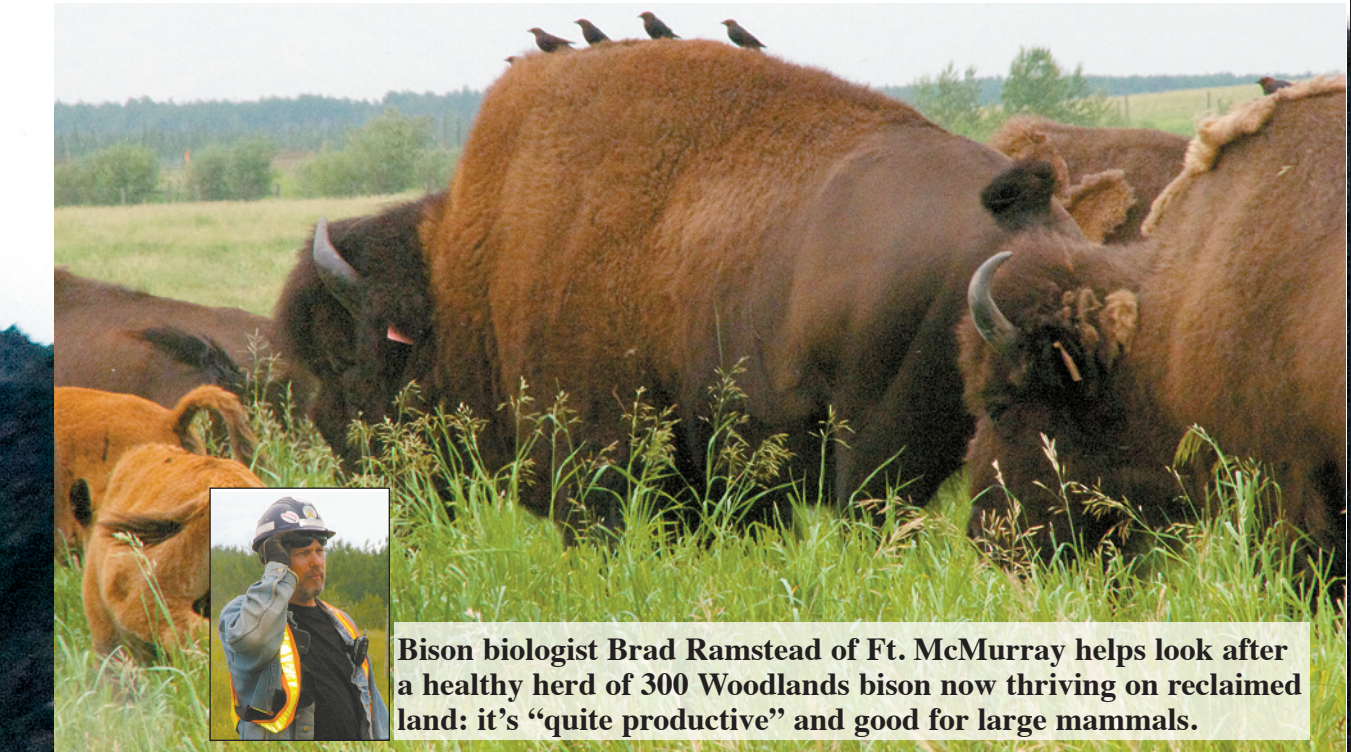


Don Thompson president of the Oilsands Developers Group in Edmonton told journalists that 70 percent of Canada’s oil requirements today come from the Alberta oil sands. He, like MLA Ray Danyluk says that “We forgot to talk to the public” and says the industry has to communicate more. He said that the oil

sands industry will be “re-claiming all the surfaces they work on.” The Edmonton man who worked for many years near Ft. McMurray and who has “some strong opinions” said that the oil sands deposit is the size of Florida but only 20 percent is minable. The minable area he says is more like the size of Cape Canaveral. He was critical of an international monthly magazine which did a recent story on the oil sands and Thompson noted that the magazine “didn’t tell the full story.” He said the oil sands take up one tenth of one percent of the boreal forest and that 604 square km has been disturbed. He urges people to “slow down and examine the facts and science—adding that explorer Peter Pond in the 1700s found oil at the Athabasca River and saw bitumen naturally flowing from the banks into the river. The “true flywheel” of the economy has 456,000 jobs linked to the oilsands added the 58 year old man and points out that \$18 billion is spent on oilsands development each year.

Raw bitumen adds to both Alberta’s and Canada’s wealth as it piles up before entering a processing operation.

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Bison biologist Brad Ramstead of Ft. McMurray helps look after a healthy herd of 300 Woodlands bison now thriving on reclaimed land: it’s “quite productive” and good for large mammals.

Research, Reclamation Efforts



Pilot plant operator Brian Sorken at Syncrude’s Research and Development Centre office in Edmonton looks for better ways to do things which could be used on-site in northern Alberta.



Forest, land, marsh re-built

A sign in an area that Syncrude has reclaimed now supports plant and wildlife. The mining consortium has claimed 4,000 hectares of land so far and say they will do reclamation decades into the future. Right: reporters climb the man-made landscape called South Bison Hills. This reclaimed area was at one time the original Syncrude mining pit which later had soil put back on top and even the hill created. A bucket wheel and drag line (now museum pieces) would have been used in this area in the mid to late 1970s.



Research technologist Betty Fung works at Syncrude’s Research and Development Centre in Edmonton.



Forestry worker Rob Vassov tends to a forest of jack pine that has been reclaimed after oil sands operations. The trees—now in their 19th growing season—planted overtop of tailing sands are growing “as fast or faster” than normal vegetation type. He handed *The Provost News* editor sand buried from approximately a foot deep for over 18 years and it appeared clean with no trace or smell of oil apparent in it.