

Introductory Remarks to Western Focus Seminar

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Good Afternoon! Welcome to Alberta and this Western Focus Seminar.

The Canadian Nuclear Society started planning for this annual conference nearly two years ago. At the time Alberta industry was booming. Concerns with carbon dioxide emissions were high. The few members of the Alberta Branch at the time thought a conference in Alberta to bring thinking about nuclear technology closer would be timely. Cosmos Voutsinos, our Branch Vice-Chair traveled to New Brunswick to make the case to the Canadian Nuclear Society Council for holding it here. Council concurred.

Having made that decision we realized that typical papers presented at CNS conferences are a little narrow in scope. They might not be comprehensible to those with a broader interest in the integration of nuclear energy into the Western Canadian economy. Titles like, “The crystal structure and elastic properties of pure and dysprosium doped urania” and “Correction in homogenization method for CANDU fuel channel deformation” reflect the dedication of the industry to improving safety and reliability. They don’t grab the attention of an engineer needing an economic source of steam for oil extraction.

We sought ways to appeal to an audience of engineers, entrepreneurs and professionals from government and industry in Western Canada and concluded we would seek presentations to supplement the broader appeal of the plenary sessions. The goal was to provide a full conference program for those interested in the application of nuclear energy in Western Canada.

It turns out we created a sort of “Field of Dreams” for nuclear entrepreneurs. The response to our request for presentations has been most gratifying. We’ve received more proposals than could be accommodated by a single session through the conference and following this combined session we will have two parallel sessions through the rest of the conference. Please note that there are also six sessions of more technical presentations. Some of those may be of interest to you too. There will be some difficult attendance choices.

I recall our conference organizers grappling with the theme for this conference. They came up with “New Nuclear Frontiers”. A double meaning was intended in reference to the new geographic area in Canada, as well as new frontiers in the application of nuclear energy.

It seems yet another frontier arises from the rich variety of nuclear technology we will hear about through the Seminar. The program provides visions of reactors sailing up the

McKenzie River to the oil sands, reactors arriving by rail to provide the electricity needs of smaller centers, and even highly portable, possibly airborne, reactors dropping in to provide energy as needed. That suggests the third frontier – bringing all this new technology under an umbrella of safety and licensing standards which will be acceptable around the world.

One is reminded we've barely seen the tip of the nuclear energy iceberg to date and that the potential to provide energy for human aspirations is almost boundless. Coming back to earth, the challenges ahead to make this happen are almost as boundless. My colleagues at the podium, Jim Harvie and Harold McFarlane will provide us some thoughts on the way forward.

Before I step out of the way, I would like to say that the Alberta Branch has made some modest progress in bringing more knowledge of nuclear issues to this frontier. We've talked to several groups, published letters and articles to try and dispel some of the myths surrounding nuclear energy, and elaborated on the opportunities it presents. We've participated in teacher's conventions and science conferences as well as a program to make school children more aware of radiation in their surroundings. We've established a lively nuclear discussion list linked with our colleagues from the nuclear industry. In closing, I ask that you consider joining the Canadian Nuclear Society and our Alberta Branch.

Thank you!