

BOOM TIMES: ALBERTA'S RED-HOT ECONOMY

Introduction

Focus

This *News in Review* module examines Alberta's booming economy. This resource-rich province enjoys Canada's highest standard of living. Its economy is growing at a rate more than twice the national average. And unlike previous booms fuelled by the world price of natural resources, this one looks like it will continue for some years. But not everything is perfect. The boom is creating problems not only for the rest of Canada, but for Alberta itself as well.

 Sections marked with this symbol indicate content suitable for younger viewers.

In a world where oil and natural gas are two of the most sought-after commodities, Alberta is perfectly placed to assume a leading role. For years the province has been Canada's largest oil producer, but most of its reserves have been locked up in the oil sands—too expensive to tap intensively in an era of cheap fuel. But, as oil prices have steadily risen to the \$70-per-barrel level, producing petroleum from this source has become quite profitable.

There is a lot of oil to extract. Alberta is estimated to have oil reserves almost as large as those of Saudi Arabia. And unlike oil from many other parts of the world, Alberta oil comes from a stable country that borders the world's largest energy user, the United States. As a result, investment money is pouring into the province, and the oilpatch is being feverishly developed. Keeping up with the need for qualified workers and new support services is proving almost impossible. Even with an influx of labour from other parts of Canada—and other countries, like Mexico and Russia—Alberta expects to have a shortage of anywhere from 100 000 to 200 000 workers over the next decade. Meanwhile, oil production is expected to almost double, sending more and more money into the provincial treasury.

The government already has taken in so much money that Alberta is now Canada's only debt-free province. The last provincial budget surplus was so high that the government issued a \$400 cheque to each provincial resident. An argument is underway over what should be done with what is anticipated to be an even more massive windfall over the next several years. Meanwhile, the rest

of Canada looks on with a mixture of envy and concern.

Accompanying the rise in the value of Alberta's natural resources has been a rise in the value of the Canadian dollar. Canada's manufacturers—the economic engine of Ontario, in particular—are now finding themselves less competitive in world markets. Most financial analysts forecast that this disparity between resource-based economies and manufacturing economies will continue for some years. While Alberta's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to grow by over seven per cent this year, Ontario's growth will likely be around two per cent.

This phenomenon even has a name: "Dutch Disease." As written in *The Economist* (December 24, 2005): "The usual explanation for this is 'Dutch Disease,' named for the hardships that befell the Netherlands after it found North Sea gas. When a country strikes hydrocarbons, a sudden inflow of dollar-denominated revenues often leads to a sharp appreciation in the domestic currency. That tends to make non-oil sectors like agriculture and manufacturing less competitive on world markets, thus leaving oil to dominate the economy."

Some forecasters feel that "Dutch Disease" may even impact Alberta. The province prides itself on the diversification of its economy, pointing out that energy makes up a smaller portion—23.9 per cent, down from 36.1 per cent—of the GDP than it did 10 years ago. Meanwhile other sectors, including manufacturing, have become more important. A more

expensive dollar, however, could have a negative impact on their future growth.

It is also worth mentioning one other area in which oil sands development is having a significant impact and causing concern for the future. Extracting oil from the sands is a filthy, energy-intensive process that defaces the landscape, causes several different kinds of pollution, and generates enormous quantities of greenhouse gases. Canada, a Kyoto signatory, has yet to repudiate the treaty (although the

federal government has indicated that it will create its own “Made in Canada” solution for reducing emissions). However, largely because of increased activity in the oil sands, Canada’s emission levels have risen dramatically, and few observers believe the country could ever meet its Kyoto targets. Unless solutions are found to prevent further increases, the Alberta boom may well leave a legacy for everyone in the province, the country—and on the planet.

For Reflection

How is the boom in the Alberta economy likely to affect you as an individual? Will a chance to participate influence any of the plans you are making for employment or education? Are there aspects of the boom—positive or negative—that you feel you need to watch especially closely? Use the organizer below to help structure your thoughts.

The Alberta Boom and . . .

My Education
My Future Employment Goals
Positive Aspects of the Boom
Negative Aspects of the Boom

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Video Review

Answer the questions in the spaces provided.

CBC Archives

To learn more about the history of Alberta, consider a visit to the CBC Digital Archives at www.cbc.ca/archives and view the audiovisual files: Alberta100 and Striking Oil in Alberta.

1. How many barrels of oil per day are produced in Alberta? _____
2. What city is described as the "capital" of Alberta's boom? _____
3. What is Peter Boyd's chief method to help him keep his staff?

4. What, according to the video, is the biggest problem currently facing Alberta?

5. How many workers is Alberta likely to be short over the next decade?

6. What does Havard Gould say are the two consequences of Alberta's status as Canada's only debt-free province?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
7. What is former energy minister Murray Smith's new job?

8. Why is oil from Alberta especially appealing to the United States?

9. What is happening to Canada's manufacturers as a result of the rise in the value of the loonie?

10. Why has Canada's central bank been raising interest rates?

11. What, according to Marc Lisac, really drives the Alberta economy?

Extension Activity

After viewing the video, discuss the following:

In the video, former premier Peter Lougheed says: "I think we have tended in our thinking at times to become too insular—in other words, to be thinking internally in the province instead of the rest of Canada. If there's a crossroads question to that issue, I'm very much a strong Canadian first. But it needs some work in this province, in my judgement, to make sure that Albertans don't get too smug and too self-satisfied and too inclined to be inward. I hope that doesn't happen."

1. Do you think that economic success will make Albertans more or less likely to think of themselves as Canadians first and Albertans second? Why or why not?

2. Should Albertans share their wealth with other Canadians? Explain fully.

3. How do you normally think of yourself—as a citizen of Canada first, or as a citizen of your province first, or even of your town or city? Why is this your first allegiance?

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Wealth in the Ground

Further Research

Extensive statistical information on the Alberta economy can be found on the Alberta government Web site at www.alberta-canada.com/statpub/economicHighlights/pdf/FactsOnAB_Feb06.pdf.

Definition

GDP is Gross Domestic Product, "the annual total value of goods produced and services provided in a country excluding transactions with other countries" (*The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*).

Simply put, Alberta is Canada's wealthiest province, and will likely be so for many years to come. The influential British journal *The Economist* (October 30, 2004) recognized Alberta's growing economic clout: "Per capita GDP in the Edmonton-Calgary corridor is now 40 per cent higher than in the rest of Canada, while the province has the lowest personal and corporate tax rates in the country. And this is attracting the investment that is now driving the province's prosperity, says Mike Percy, the dean of business studies at the University of Alberta: 'Right now close to CDN\$95-billion in capital investments are either underway or planned for the next decade.'"

Alberta is the only province in Canada that has no debt and no sales tax. In addition, Albertans pay the lowest income and corporate taxes in the country. One of the results is that Albertans have the highest standard of living in Canada, one that will likely only continue to improve.

A BMO Financial Group outlook (*Calgary Herald*, January 4, 2006) reported that Albertans' living standards are already 45 per cent above the national average, and 40 per cent higher than that of Ontarians. By 2015, BMO predicts the level will be 55 per cent above the Canadian average. The report goes on to say: "Alberta should continue to offer the best job prospects in the nation . . . and the largest increase in incomes." Alberta's unemployment rate, already the lowest in the country is expected to average 3.5 per cent until 2015. This will be three percentage points lower than Canada's average.

In 2006, the Canadian economy is

expected to grow by 2.9 per cent. That of Ontario, sometimes called the "economic engine" of Canada, is expected to increase by little more than two per cent. Alberta's economy is expected to grow by more than seven per cent. The average Albertan's personal disposable income will increase 71 per cent to \$46 000 (from \$26 961 in 2004). This will be 23 per cent higher than the Canadian average.

Oil and Gas

"Albertans are swimming in oil and gas money. The province's prosperity is tied directly to the sky-rocketing price of oil and gas; lately it has reaped enormous benefits from the royalties that are paid to the government" (*Canada and the World*, December 2005).

How much the energy sector—that is, oil and gas—contributes to Alberta's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) varies somewhat according to who is doing the calculating. But it is certainly the largest single component of the GDP. The government reported it as 23.9 per cent in 2004. Even more significantly, the royalties from oil and gas production fund much of the provincial government's budget.

In 2004, royalties covered about 40 per cent of the expenditures in the provincial budget. Alberta reported a \$5-billion budget surplus that year. Had the province spent the same amount and not had the royalties, it would have suffered a \$5-billion deficit.

As the prices of oil and natural gas have increased, so have the royalties for the government. Initially predicting \$5-billion in royalties, the government

found itself with \$10-billion instead. As a result, Alberta was able to retire the \$3.7-billion provincial debt.

Prices are expected to continue to be high for some time to come. And every time a barrel of oil rises by \$1, the royalties to the Alberta treasury go up by \$99-million.

Not only has the price of oil increased, but the amount produced is also increasing. In 2004, Alberta produced 1.72 million barrels of oil per day. By 2014, that figure will likely be about 2.8 million.

The price increases for oil, gas, and other commodities have led to enormous increases in investment in Alberta. Over \$46-billion of new investment in oil production alone was announced in 2005. Huge construction projects are also taking place in Alberta and other Western provinces. These include new railway lines and pipelines and the expansion of some ports.

Reviewing the state of the Canadian economy, *The Economist* (September 24, 2005) summed up as follows: “Natural resources, construction, and

business services (which includes work by architects and engineers) are now the three fastest-growing sectors of the economy. Natural resources, and notably energy, account for more than 60 per cent of Canada’s exports (when imported components are subtracted). This is good news for the resource-rich Western provinces of Alberta and British Columbia but less so for Ontario, where manufacturing has been hit hard by an appreciation of the Canadian dollar and the continuing troubles of the North American carmakers.”

Canada is estimated to hold oil reserves second only to those of Saudi Arabia. Alberta’s Athabaskan oil sands, along with two smaller deposits in the same area and some large deposits on Melville Island in the Arctic, contain the bulk of Canada’s estimated oil reserves—95 per cent of Canada’s 180-plus billion barrels are found there. With demand for oil expected only to increase, Alberta’s future looks bright indeed.

For Discussion

Make a word map with the words *Alberta Boom* in the centre and then add relevant numbers, statistics, and facts that demonstrate the scope of the boom. Circle the three elements that you feel are most important. Be prepared to explain your choice.

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Sharing the Wealth

Further Research

Information from the Government of Alberta about its surplus is at www.gov.ab.ca/home/albertasurplus. This includes the government's strategic vision.

The huge sums of money pouring into the Alberta treasury pose an interesting problem for the government. What exactly should they do with all this money? Should taxes be reduced? Should investments be made in infrastructure, health, education, and the arts? Should it be shared out directly with the province's citizens? Should it be set aside for a time when the oil runs out (or, as has happened in the past, the price plummets)? Should any of it be shared with the rest of Canada?

"Ralph Bucks"

Alberta's premier, Ralph Klein, had two quick answers in 2005. The first was to send every Albertan a government cheque for \$400 as their share of the royalties windfall. These "Ralph Bucks" (as many Albertans referred to them) totalled \$1.4-billion. He also expressed his opinion that additional surpluses should be used to make further cuts to personal and corporate taxes, which would help to attract workers and investment to the province.

Not all Albertans were thrilled with the decision to send cheques to everyone. Both the Calgary Chamber of Commerce (www.calgarychamber.com) and the Canada West Foundation (www.cwf.ca) (a think-tank) said the money could be better spent. Immediate corporate tax cuts, they felt, would have been much more useful.

Thinking Big

In March of 2006, *Time* magazine asked four Alberta "experts" what they would do with a \$7.4-billion surplus. The suggestions varied, but all involved the idea of sharing, with Albertans and

other Canadians (*Time*, March 27, 2006). Among them:

- Invest in cities and infrastructure for the thousands of newcomers the province is encouraging to move there; and invest in the future by pouring money into schools and universities (Catherine Ford, journalist).
- Put at least \$5-billion a year into a trust fund, aiming for a total of \$200-billion. The income could be used to fund essential Alberta programs, and provide loans at reasonable rates to other Canadian provinces and cities (Michael Robinson, president of the Glenbow Museum, www.glenbow.org).
- Invest in Canadian culture by making Alberta a centre for film, television, art, dance, theatre, fashion, and the media. Pour money into all of Canada's national parks: "Nature protected courtesy of the Province of Alberta" (Katherine Govier, novelist).
- Create Centres for Excellence to benefit all Canadians. These might include one for medical-networking to share best practices and research; one on public governance, to promote ethics in government; and one to unite Canadians around core Canadian values (Gwyn Morgan, executive vice-chairman, EnCana Corp.).

Spreading the Wealth Over Generations

Many believe that the royalties collected by the government belong to both present and future generations. Former premier Peter Lougheed is one of these people. Lougheed's government created the Alberta Heritage

Savings and Trust Fund in 1976, setting aside oil royalties for future use. The fund now has about \$12-billion, but no government has put anything into it since 1987.

The *Red Deer Advocate* (February 17, 2006) reported that Lougheed wrote that the revenues from oil and gas belong to not just the current generation of Albertans but to future generations. This is because Alberta is profiting from selling off a depleting resource. Future generations have a valid claim to receive part of it. According to Lougheed, it is again time to start putting money aside.

Aid for Other Provinces?

While Alberta's economy is experiencing super growth, not all of the country is doing quite as well. Ontario, in particular, suffers as Alberta grows. The same two things that support strong growth in Western Canada—high energy prices and a strong dollar—are slowing growth in Central and Eastern Canada. The high cost of energy to run manufacturing plants caused by increases in the price of gas and oil are

one factor in this slowdown. The second, the increase in the value of the Canadian dollar, raises the price of the goods produced by those plants and makes them more expensive as exports.

Should Albertans share any revenue from the production of oil and gas in their province with other provinces? In 1980 the Canadian government initiated the National Energy Program (NEP) which, among other things, contained a heavy tax that researchers estimated removed at least \$100-billion from the Alberta economy. Albertans have never forgiven the federal (Liberal) government for this. No federal government is likely to attempt a similar plan.

Most Albertans argue that a strong Alberta economy is of benefit to the rest of Canada. The need for new workers, machinery and equipment, as well as the growth in the construction and manufacturing sectors, means that qualified individuals from across the country can find work there. It also means orders for specialized equipment from Central and Eastern Canadian plants. Ultimately, they feel, everyone benefits.

Analysis

1. How do you think Alberta should deal with its budget surpluses? Should they be returned in some form to Alberta's current residents? Should they be saved for a "rainy day"? Should they be used to improve government programs?
2. Production of petroleum from oil sands makes huge demands on the environment. Should any of the money in the budget surplus be dedicated to ensuring land reclamation for future generations? Explain.

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The Cost of Being Rich

Further Research

The Pembina Institute is "an independent, not-for-profit environmental policy research and education organization." It was founded in Drayton Valley Alberta. Its Web site is www.pembina.org. The complete Pembina Institute report *Oil Sands Fever: The Environmental Implications of Canada's Oil Sands Rush*, may be downloaded at www.oilsandswatch.org.

While Alberta's economy is the envy of Canada, not every aspect of the boom is desirable. Here is a brief survey of some of the less desirable impacts of the hot economy on Alberta and the rest of Canada.

A Labour Shortage

The growth of the oil sands industry in Alberta has created a tremendous labour shortage in the province. The Canadian national unemployment rate is about 6.8 per cent; Alberta's is less than 3.4 per cent. Workers of all kinds are in short supply, but blue-collar workers are especially in demand. An Alberta government report projects that there will be a 100 000-worker shortfall over the next 10 years.

The increased oil sands activity is having an effect on labour throughout the province. Minimum-wage industries find it almost impossible to find workers. The Royal Bank of Canada (*CanWest News*, January 27, 2006) warned that "mushrooming activity in the Alberta oilpatch is crowding out other industries by driving labour and raw material costs sky-high—trends that could affect the province's growth."

Other forecasters see the oil-sands regions draining more and more workers and capital resources from other parts of the province, further discouraging the growth of some economic sectors.

Other provinces are affected as well. Manitoba has a number of large projects underway—including new northern hydro dams and major infrastructure redevelopment. The companies involved already have a shortage of

skilled workers and are unable to compete with the higher wages offered in Alberta.

Environmental Degradation

The environmental impact of oil sands development is devastating. The process of extracting oil from the sands contributes enormously to Canada's greenhouse gas emissions—over 25 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year, with the figure expected to rise to 82 million tonnes by 2020. Huge areas are torn up by strip mines. Tailings ponds are filled with toxic chemicals.

A report from the Pembina Institute is a catalogue of the many problems caused by developing the oil sands. In addition to the impacts in the previous paragraph, they call attention to the need for huge quantities of other resources in extracting oil from the sands:

- Alberta is Canada's largest producer of natural gas, one of our most valuable finite natural resources. Petroleum extraction from the oil sands uses 600 million cubic feet of natural gas per day. This figure will triple by 2012.
- Alberta is seen by many experts as the province most likely to be severely affected by any future water shortages. Current mining operations are allowed to use 349 million cubic metres of water from the Athabasca River. This is three times the amount used by the city of Calgary. The oil sands use three to six barrels of water for every barrel of oil produced. In eight years the oil sands are expected to produce 2.8 million barrels of oil per day.

Alberta's boreal forest, a complete

Quote

"I have a lot of students that have the ability to go out right now in the oilpatch and probably make more money than I am making." — Ron Lindsay, Principal, Blessed Sacrament outreach school, Wainwright, Alberta (quoted in *The [St. John's] Telegram*, April 23, 2006)

wilderness only 40 years ago, is now fragmented by mining operations, roads, pipelines, and power lines. The oil sands' "footprint" in the forest was about 400 square kilometres in 2003; currently planned development sees this growing to 2000 square kilometres. This means a significant loss of habitat for boreal forest wildlife.

Equally significant is the question of the industry's dedication to cleaning up the land once it has depleted its resources. The Alberta Energy and Utility Board has reported that there are currently \$9-billion worth of oil wells and gas facilities that haven't been cleaned up and reclaimed. The industry has only set aside \$20-million to do this job.

A Social Dilemma

The boom has also created several social problems. Most involve communities unable to grow fast enough to meet the pressure caused by the influx of new workers. Accommodation, schools, and medical services are in short supply.

Analysis

With such a blistering economic boom, some Alberta students seem to be ready to cut their future education short in order to get good wages today.

In an article in the *St. John's Telegram* (April 23, 2006), Myron Ganser, the chair of the East Central Alberta Catholic School Board, is quoted as saying: "The thing you have to sell them on is that (an education) buys you a better lifestyle—a better opportunity for family life, for days off, paid holidays, and that type of thing. We're trying to spend time with kids, saying that money doesn't buy happiness. That's the thing that you have to convince kids of in order to get them to post-secondary now—because they might make less by going to post-secondary."

1. How effective do you think Ganser's argument would be in convincing students to stay in school?
2. Which students would respond most positively? Negatively? Why?
3. How would you respond if you were in school in booming Alberta?

One of the more unusual results has been the effect on the high-school dropout rate. There are many well-paid entry-level jobs in the oil industry for any young male who is willing to work long hours in tough conditions. Many high school students whose work is marginal are dropping out to take these jobs. These young people are well aware that, in the current economic climate, they can make as much or more money than they would if they learned a trade or earned a degree.

A recent Statistics Canada study confirmed that the boom has been good to Alberta dropouts. From 2002 through 2005, the employment rate for Alberta's high-school dropouts was 68.7 per cent, while the average employment rate for high-school graduates in the rest of Canada in 2004-2005 was only 67.8 per cent. In other words, a high-school dropout in Alberta was more likely to be working than was a high-school graduate from anywhere else in Canada. That same dropout would likely also be making a lot more money.

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Ralph Klein

Further Research

For an excellent, brief political biography of Ralph Klein, visit the CBC Web site at www.cbc.ca/news/background/klein-ralph.

It seems somewhat ironic that, at a time when Alberta's economy is performing better than any other province's, the premier has been "encouraged" to leave office much earlier than he had planned.

Ralph Klein, Alberta's premier since December 1992, won four elections as leader of the provincial Conservatives, scoring majority victories in all of them. In the 2001 election, the party won the second-largest majority in Alberta's history. While popular support declined in the 2004 election, the party still held an impressive majority of seats, 62 of the total of 83 in the provincial legislature.

Following the 2004 election, Klein announced that he would be stepping down as premier before the next one, likely to be held in 2008. However, many Albertans—and members of his own party—were taken aback when he announced his intention of staying on until October 2007.

By 2006, criticism of the premier was far from unusual. Many Albertans felt that he had lost interest in governing, and that he was out of touch with popular opinion and failing to deal with the problems generated by a booming economy. Criticism from Conservative Party members was also growing. In March, a former transportation minister was thrown out of the party for speaking out against Klein's decision to stay on until late 2007.

Shortly after this ouster, the party held its convention, part of which included a mandatory leadership review of the premier's performance. Many observers felt that the writing was on the wall. They were proven correct when, after a speech in which Klein

seemed almost to beg for delegate support, he received just 55 per cent approval of his performance as premier.

On April 4, 2006, Klein announced that he was calling for a leadership convention for September 2006. He expects to be stepping down as premier by the end of the year.

Accomplishment and Controversy

Ralph Klein's political career has had both highs and lows. Klein first came to politics in 1980 as the mayor of Calgary, a position he held through 1989. He was mayor when Calgary won the right to hold the 1988 Winter Olympics, and still mayor when they proved to be a triumphant success. Unlike the earlier summer Olympics in Montreal, the Calgary Olympics made money; and they left behind a legacy of specialized training facilities that have been used by Canada's winter athletes ever since.

Klein's first national impact, however, came in 1982 when he was quoted as blaming "Eastern creeps and bums"—Eastern Canadians who had been attracted to Alberta by jobs available in the energy sector—for the rising crime and welfare rates in Calgary. Needless to say, Eastern Canada was less than charmed. Nevertheless, Klein remained extremely popular in Calgary, and only left the mayor's office to run for the legislature in a 1989 election.

After winning his seat in March 1989, Klein was appointed Minister of the Environment by Premier Don Getty. Getty resigned in 1992, and in December Klein won the Conservative Party leadership and became premier. In 1993, he led the party for the first time in an election, and won.

CBC Archives

To learn more about Alberta politics and Ralph Klein, consider a visit to the CBC Digital Archives at www.cbc.ca/archives and explore the audio-visual files: *Electing Dynasties: Alberta Campaigns 1935-2001* and *The Winter of '88: Calgary's Olympic Games*.

Klein promised a balanced budget for Alberta by 1997. His first budget cut Alberta spending by nearly \$1-billion—decreasing hospital beds and laying off civil servants, among other measures. He also raised premiums for health care and many other fees. In 1995—two years ahead of schedule—the budget was balanced.

Elections in 1997 and 2001 were won with ever-increasing majorities. In 2004, Klein and the Conservatives easily maintained their hold on the province with a fourth election victory.

In 2005 came an even more significant milestone for the premier. Royalties from the oil and gas industry contributed so much to the provincial treasury that Alberta was able to pay off its debt and become Canada's only debt-free province.

Klein's long reign was not completely free of controversy. Some Albertans argued that an obsession with cutting debt had weakened the province's social services, especially in education and health. It also had left

large areas of infrastructure in need of repair. Some of his programs—the most recent being a “third way” in health care—were failures from the outset, too controversial for public acceptance.

The premier's behaviour also came under fire from time to time. His notoriety for enjoying more than the odd drink caught up with him in 2001, when he got into an argument with men at an Edmonton homeless shelter, swearing and yelling at them. Klein did apologize and promised to control his drinking. More recently, in the legislature, an angry Premier Klein threw a booklet prepared by the opposition Liberals at one of the legislative pages. Again, he apologized for his outburst.

The rise of Alberta's resource-based economy, thanks to international demands, played a large role in Klein's successful political career. However, he himself became a real icon of the “New West”—tough, resourceful, independent, and successful. His departure, for most Canadians, not just Albertans, marks the end of an era.

To Consider

Ralph Klein is hardly the first politician—Canadian or otherwise—who has failed to recognize that the time had come to resign. Why do you think many successful politicians find it so hard to end their careers on a high note?

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Activity: Go West, Young Person

The following article appeared on the Canadian Press Newswire on January 31, 2006:

A new Alberta government report projects a shortfall of 100 000 workers over the next decade in the province's super-heated economy. The report calls for a stronger push to train more workers and better recruitment programs to lure more people into the workforce, including Aboriginals. There's also a renewed call for relaxed federal immigration policies to allow more skilled workers to come to Alberta from outside of Canada.

Alberta's booming oilsands region has been complaining for several years about a lack of tradesmen to help build more than \$100-million in new projects over the next two decades.

The report also calls for public input through the government's Internet Web site (www.gov.ab.ca) to gather new ideas to expand the workforce. The government is also holding more than 60 meetings over the next several months with business leaders, Aboriginal groups, educators, and others with a stake in helping to deal with this dire shortage of workers.

During the 19th century, when U.S. and Canadian governments were attempting to encourage settlement in the West, aggressive campaigns were waged around the theme "Go West, Young Man." Governments promoted the area as a land of opportunity, a place where those willing to face challenges and work hard would reap great rewards.

Would such a campaign work for 21st century Alberta? It might, given the right approach. The opportunities are real and so are the rewards.

The Activity

Your task is to design a campaign to encourage young people to consider a future as Albertans. The format of the campaign—a radio or TV spot, poster, brochure, newspaper advertisement, Web ad, etc.—is up to you. It should, however, use material from the video and/or print portion of this *News in Review* module to support your case that Alberta is, indeed, a land of opportunity.

Further material may be found in the publication *Understanding Alberta's Labour Force: Looking to the Future* (September 2005) on the Alberta government Web site at www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/lmi/pdf/understandingab_labourforce.pdf.