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* Forestry Round Table *

Captains of industry, cabinet ministers and other government politicians, as well as a number of deputy ministers and senior bureaucrats, met in Edmonton (*by invitation only*) last week to discuss the state of the forestry sector in Alberta.

The round table, largely organized by Edmonton businessman Robert Rosen and the *Alberta Economic Development Authority* (AEDA), provided industry and government with a venue to discuss further developmental opportunities within the sector and the challenges that might be impeding its growth.

Industry leaders told the government to stay on track with present policies and regulations governing their operations in Alberta. The resonant message was to stay away from similar government moves, such as those made in British Columbia, which have increased the cost of obtaining the fibre base and reduced the industry's competitiveness.

On the other hand, government officials were eager to learn of the industry's plans to expand secondary/tertiary manufacturing and of their improvements in productivity. With the primary allocation of timber nearing its peak, the next generation of plants is expected to be the further development of engineered wood products.

The forestry sector is the province's third-largest economic generator, behind the oil and gas and agriculture industries. It is estimated that \$10 billion worth of forestry infrastructure is currently in operation across the province. The round table was a spinoff from the forestry conference, held every other year, which is co-sponsored by the AEDA and *PricewaterhouseCoopers*.

The AEDA should be exploring the possibility of conducting further round tables in other industrial sectors or even cross-sectoral discussions that affect issues such as infrastructure, the regulatory process and labour force requirements. Global competitiveness is another topic on the minds of many firms actively seeking an entry point or those wishing to expand into foreign markets.

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- Legislation Passed During Spring Session (Brief Description, Date Each Bill Becomes Law, Sponsor)..... 2
- Labour Federation Claims Government Anti-Union/ EUB Ordered To Conduct Compensation Hearing..... 3
- News Briefs (Illegal Strike/Health Care Funding/MOU/Agriculture Funding/Gaming)..... 3
- On The Move (AG Reappointment/New ADM/Government Staff Secondment)/ Cabinet Business/ On The Agenda..... 4
- Who We Are/ How To Reach Us (Address, fax, phone, e-mail, Website)/ Subscription Rates..... 4