

BRANCHING OUT

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Forestry conference will highlight Alberta assets

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Move over, oil and gas. Forestry is about to strut its stuff in a big way.

Alberta's other big resource industry is flexing its muscles and showing off its new duds in a major business conference Thursday.

The state-of-the-forestry-industry conference, called New Horizons for Growth: Shaping Canada's Forest Industry for the 21st Century, is being staged by management consultants Price Waterhouse. It's an acknowledgement of the growing influence of Alberta's forestry industry, a \$4-billion-a-year business that's the third-largest primary economic sector of the province, after energy and agriculture.

Edmonton businessman Robert Rosen, chair of the natural resources committee of the Alberta Economic Development Authority, says the conference's significance can be weighed by the fact it is getting big corporate attention from forest-products companies along with 600 industry participants.

"The key point to it is that we're getting nine CEOs coming in to Edmonton, of which that many have never come together for a conference before in Canada," says Rosen. Similar conferences have been held before in Montreal and Vancouver and organizers have been pleased if they could attract two top corporate executives, said Rosen.

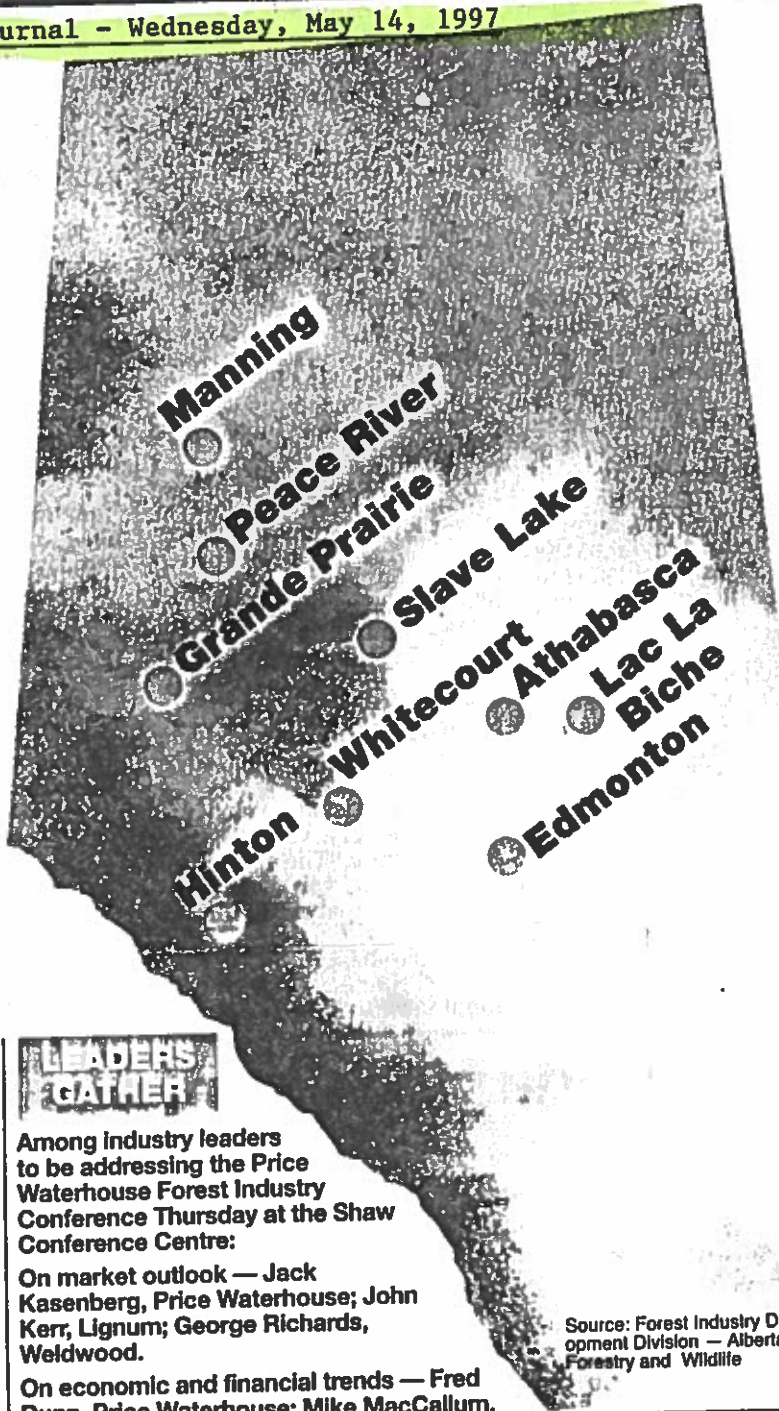
Among those coming is the top boss of Louisiana Pacific, who doesn't hold a single property in Alberta. But the firm is interested in looking at business possibilities.

While only a decade old, Alberta's forest industry has the oriented strand-board market cornered, in terms of technology and product advancement, says Rosen.

Indeed, Alberta's forestry industry is attracting plenty of outside interest. In the last year, two B.C.-based forestry giants have made significant investments here. West Fraser Timber spent \$393 million acquiring Ranger Forest Products in northeast Alberta and Ainsworth lumber has proposed a \$150-million oriented strand-board plant that will create 425 full-time jobs near High Level.

In the last several years, there has been multibillion-dollar Japanese and domestic investment in establishing Alberta's pulp and paper industry.

Ralph Peterson, senior partner for Price Waterhouse in Edmonton, says there are several aims in staging the conference. "We view it as a great opportunity to bring the



LEADERS TOGETHER

Among industry leaders to be addressing the Price Waterhouse Forest Industry Conference Thursday at the Shaw Conference Centre:

On market outlook — Jack Kasenberg, Price Waterhouse; John Kerr, Lignum; George Richards, Weldwood.

On economic and financial trends — Fred Dunn, Price Waterhouse; Mike MacCallum, Price Waterhouse; Josh Mendelsohn, CIBC.

Morning panel: Cornerstones for Growth, An Alberta Perspective — Dale Dowell, Price Waterhouse; Hank Ketcham, West Fraser Timber; Jim Shepherd, Crestbrook; Ron Stern, Alberta Newsprint.

Afternoon panel: Global Competition — Bob Elliott, Zeidler; Peter Bentley, Canadian Forest Products; Tom Hamaoka, Daishowa-Marubeni International; George Weyerhaeuser, Weyerhaeuser Canada.

In addition to industry leaders, federal Natural Resources Minister Anne McLellan is keynote speaker at the conference. The conference's wind-up speaker, talking about the Alberta Advantage, is Pat Black, Alberta's minister of economic development and tourism. She's subbing for Premier Ralph Klein, still recuperating from broken ribs.

Source: Forest Industry Development Division — Alberta Forestry and Wildlife

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Source: Statistics Canada

industry together with suppliers to the industry. We'll also have representatives of the provincial government, and it's a great opportunity to focus on growth and growth opportunities."

Mike MacCallum, who chairs Price Waterhouse's World Forest Industry Group, said the enormous developments that Alberta's forest

industry has undergone in the past decade have enhanced the province's international standing in the forest industry.

There will be seminars on market outlook, economic and financial trends, as well as panels discussing global competition and an Alberta perspective on industry growth.