

# “Big Picture” Thinking

## The challenge of sharing information and working together to advance our industry

*In October 2004, the pipeline industry held its fifth biannual International Pipeline Conference in Calgary, Alberta. The Conference was attended by over 1,100 delegates from 40 countries. The Alberta Chamber of Resources cosponsored a keynote address by Art Meyer, Vice President of Technology with Enbridge Pipelines and past President of the ACR. We are pleased to share Art's keynote address here, given that his message on safety and sharing information applies to all industry sectors...*



*Art Meyer*

**Vice President, Technology, Enbridge Pipelines and Past President, Alberta Chamber of Resources**

I'd like to speak on a topic that requires “big picture” thinking and an international effort. I am referring to the challenge of sharing information and working together on a global scale to advance our industry, improve safety and reduce the potential for incidents.

Today, there are many great examples of global information sharing and this conference provides an excellent example. You have made the International Pipeline Conference one of the premier pipeline gatherings in the world.

Another case in point is the Banff Pipeline Workshop that Winston Revie of CanMet organizes biannually. The next Workshop is scheduled for April 2005 and is an event that brings together many of our industry's top pipeline integrity experts.

While these are truly great examples, our ability to learn from one another in a global sense is limited. We spend most of our time working in different organizations and have

limited contact throughout the year. Some of the time that may not matter; however, it can be a serious drawback when safety and pipeline integrity issues arise.

We are also challenged by three characteristics of our industry.

**I would challenge all of us to visualize a virtual pipeline community ... on an international scale.**

First, we are geographically dispersed, which makes shared learning difficult. We don't live in a pipeline version of Silicon Valley where the latest innovations are readily apparent across the street.

Second, it's difficult to communicate best practices beyond

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national clusters. Our industry associations and regulators are generally country specific and it takes a great deal of effort to communicate across borders or on an intercontinental basis.

Third, and perhaps most important, our industry has few incidents. While we may be proud of that record in comparison to other modes of transportation, the rarity of these incidents means that we must take every opportunity to learn from each one. While information from incidents in other countries may eventually reach us it, regrettably, does not always so in a deliberate or timely fashion.

It's indeed ironic that we face these barriers given that the world has grown smaller through increased trade, email and wireless communications. We need to ask ourselves: how can we reduce our barriers and share information more openly on a global scale?

Let's take some local examples.

When the Canadian Standards Association releases Land Use Planning Guidelines for Pipelines, how can we ensure that our global industry has access to this one of a kind municipal planning document? When the Alberta Chamber of Resources publishes a report on its members' one hundred best practices in aboriginal relations, how does the pipeline industry put that to use in its many dealings with aboriginal peoples? When Pipeline Research Council International is pursuing a research initiative that will advance our industry but requires co funding, how can that information be shared with the entire international pipeline community. And finally, when a pipeline fails in Bellingham or Belgium, how can we receive accurate and timely information that allows us to implement learnings on our own systems.

I believe that the answer lies within our international community and, in part, through technology. At

the push of a button, we should be able access a virtual worldwide pipeline community. We should be able to see this year's pipeline incident reports from every country that publishes its findings. We should be able to review postings of best practices from our colleagues in other organizations. We should be able to learn of new pipeline regulations, standards or research initiatives from around the globe. We should have immediate access to the latest perspectives and presentations made at regulatory forums or industry conferences like this ... and that information should be shared widely beyond those in attendance.

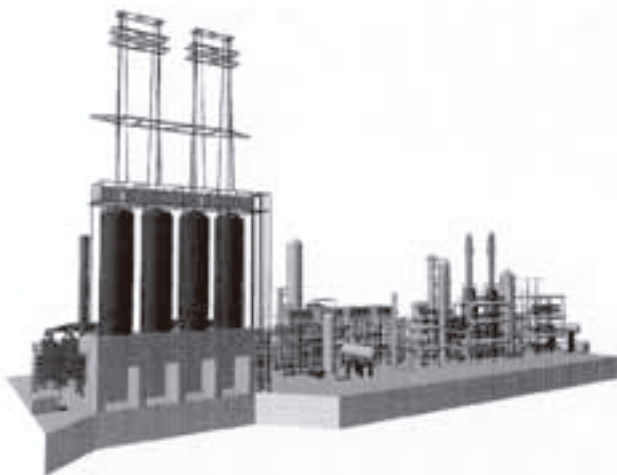
Do we have that access to information today - the short answer is no. While we can all use the Internet, it's challenging and time consuming to find the right information at the right time. It's also easy to miss information that may be relevant given the unstructured nature of the Web.



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So how do we create the technological platform that will enable us to share information on a global basis; to provide updates on incidents from around the world; to summarize initiatives that are being pursued on a national or international basis; and to describe best practices that would be of common interest?

I see two possible paths.

In one case we could look to an organization, existing or new, to fill that void with the backing of an international consortium of industry and regulators. The necessary technologies exist today to permit the creation of a virtual pipeline community on a global scale.

This means providing every interested pipeline, regulator, service provider and industry stakeholder with access to a common portal.

In a second case, we could have a third party, funded through a combination of industry, government and commercial interests, provide a platform that would become the hub of international information sharing.

Is this big picture proposition possible? Yes, for the first time in the history of our industry, we have the technical capability to share information through a single portal in real time between all interested parties. Information can be posted from any point in the world in a matter of seconds.

Can we afford it? That would depend on international collaboration. If costs are shared on a widely distributed basis, then the fee to any one organization to access the portal should be manageable. These cost sharing structures are already in place within many associations today.

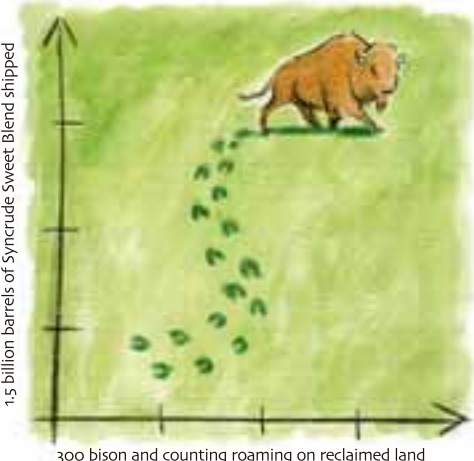
Is the value proposition high enough? Each of us would, of course, have to draw our own conclusions. Would your staff find value in having immediate access to a worldwide repository of pipeline information? Is it important for your company to know about the latest developments in integrity

management? Would you like to understand the cause of recent pipeline failures and recommended safety or mitigation practices?

While there may be many challenges, I'd pass on a quote from Wayne Gretzky, one of Canada's great sports stars. Wayne said that you always miss one hundred percent of the shots you never take. We, as an industry, will need to decide whether to give this a shot or be guaranteed a miss.

In closing, I would challenge all of us to visualize a virtual pipeline community ... on an international scale. A community where information flows freely across the globe; where we can drive further advances in the pipeline industry; and where we can work together to improve safety and reduce the potential for incidents.

Let's plant that seed today and see if it takes root. ■




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