



# news release

E X T E R N A L R E L A T I O N S

COMMUNICATIONS P: (403) 220-4756 F: (403) 282-8413 E: uofcnews@ucalgary.ca

November 27, 2008

## Water woes on tap for industry

### **Businesses must prepare now or pay later for climate change impacts, says U of C expert**

Canada's industrial sector should be drawing up plans now for the impacts of climate change such as water scarcity and paying for the water they use, says a University of Calgary professor who leads a national advisory panel on the environment and the economy.

Robert Page, chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, predicts that the province of Alberta will either be allocating or charging for water usage within the next five years.

"For businesses for the future, they're either going to have to cut water consumption or pay for water," said Page, among four experts from academia and industry who'll speak at the Business Adaptation to Climate Change knowledge forum this Friday, Nov. 28 at the Calgary Chamber of Commerce.

"Everywhere south of Red Deer is probably going to be facing some acute water availability challenges."

The forum is hosted by the Research Network for Business Sustainability, in partnership with the U of C's Haskayne School of Business, the Calgary Chamber of Commerce and the Ivey Business School.

Page, who is also the TransAlta Professor of Environmental Management and Sustainability in the U of C's Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy, says industry needs to pay more attention to adapting its operations to climate change in addition to mitigation measures such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Water shortages and high-priced water could significantly affect oil, gas and oilsands production, electrical power-generation, cement manufacturing, agriculture and other sectors, Page said.

In southern Alberta, where there is a provincial moratorium on issuing new water licences from the already over-allocated South Saskatchewan River basin (which includes the Bow River), businesses face a big challenge, he noted.

In addition, the mountain snowpack that supplies spring runoff to lakes and rivers in the Rocky Mountain eastern slopes is becoming more variable, and the Bow Glacier that feeds the Bow River which supplies Calgary is receding. Moreover, much of the watershed upstream of Calgary isn't a protected water supply.

Three provinces – Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba – are all dependent on water flows in the South Saskatchewan River basin and on interprovincial agreements governing this water flow, Page said. “So unless we manage water better, we’re not only hurting Albertans, we’re hurting the people of Saskatchewan and Manitoba as well.”

Some businesses, such as the oilsands industry, are investing in new technologies and processes that use less water. But many businesses, especially in the services sector that supports the energy sector, haven’t started their climate change adaptation plans, Page said. “No one is thinking about the economic costs for businesses of constrained water supplies or very high-cost water supplies.”

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, an independent expert body that advises the federal government, will launch in January a major, two-year study focused on natural resource industries and water – which Page will discuss at the forum.

“The idea of this forum is to get researchers in the same room as people who are dealing with the challenges of business adaptation to climate change, so we can start to build ways of finding solutions,” said Frances Bowen, director of the International Institute for Resource Industries and Sustainability Studies (IRIS) in Haskayne School.

The forum will provide an opportunity for dialogue across sectors and disciplines, allowing academic, practitioner, government and non-government leaders to network and learn from one another, Bowen said.

It is part of an IRIS research project entitled “The Changing Climate of the Energy Industry,” funded by a Knowledge Impact in Society grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

**Media Availability:** Robert Page is available today (Thursday) to media. Please contact Mark Lowey at ISEEE to arrange an interview.

In addition, media are welcome to cover any or all of the four experts speaking at the forum:

(<http://www.ivey.uwo.ca/centres/building/outreach/Climate/default.htm>).

#### **For more information:**

Mark Lowey, Communications Director  
Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy  
Phone: (403)-210-8659  
Cell: (403)-990-6986  
Email: mlowey@ucalgary.ca

Laurie Ingraham, IRIS Program Director  
Phone: 403-220-3318  
Cell: 403-978-6500  
Email: laurie.ingraham@haskayne.ucalgary.ca