

# ACCESS

## ALBERTA

April - June 2005

### Alberta Business Excellence Takes Centre Stage

by Barb Steele

An excited buzz ran through the crowd. Faces of hopeful business leaders from across Alberta watched as the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual **Alberta Business Awards of Distinction** gala ceremony began.

Gathered at Edmonton's Shaw Conference Centre on February 23 were the movers and shakers, the up-and-comers, the business elite — Alberta businesses whose innovative ideas are building a stronger economy. Community, business and government leaders from across the province were on hand to acknowledge the success and contributions of the business community that helps create the Alberta advantage!

The Awards, hosted by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, recognized business savvy in areas ranging from youth employment to First Nations-owned business, employment of persons with disabilities to learning and diversity in the workplace. Awards were presented in 13 individual categories, as well as the prestigious Premier's Award of Distinction, which is presented annually to a company

chosen from finalists in all award categories to recognize outstanding achievement, leadership and community involvement.

Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) has proudly sponsored the **Export Award of Distinction** for seven years. WD is committed to providing enhanced support for international business development in the West by working with the provinces, International Trade Canada and other federal departments to expand global trade and investment opportunities for Western Canada.

The Export Award is presented to the organization that best demonstrates outstanding achievement in exporting products or services outside of Canada's borders.

And the nominees in 2005 were... AltaSteel Ltd., Blue Fall Manufacturing Ltd. and Upside Software Inc. 🍁



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## Turning Scrap Into

by Matthew Wispinski



*Doug Maley, Assistant Deputy Minister, WD Alberta Region (R), presented the Export Award of Distinction to Mr. Peter M. Ouellette, President and CEO of AltaSteel (L), at the awards gala held in Edmonton.*

What happens when a business makes a commitment to build lasting and profitable partnerships with other companies, recycles material destined for landfill into a useful and marketable product, and, in the process, increases export sales by nearly 100 per cent over a three-year period? People sit up and take notice, that's what! On February 23, Edmonton-based **AltaSteel Ltd.** was recognized for these impressive accomplishments, walking

away with the prestigious Export Award at the 2005 Alberta Business Awards of Distinction gala.

Western Economic Diversification Canada's **Export Award of Distinction** honours an organization that has demonstrated outstanding achievement in exporting products or services outside of Canada's borders. AltaSteel is setting a high standard on this front, bringing their total expected direct and indirect export sales to \$110 million in 2004, up from \$56.1 million three years ago.

AltaSteel takes scrap metal destined for landfill sites and recycles it into useful, valued-added products that are shipped to more than 150 customers in 17 countries around the world. With products used by the mining, oil and gas, agriculture, machinery, forging, cold fishing and construction industries, the company services a diversified market.

The significant export growth AltaSteel enjoys began in 1990 when the company took a big risk, shifting its focus away from domestic business to export opportunities. It developed a creative and innovative export marketing strategy, and put in place a number of initiatives to help realize the vision: partnering with other Alberta customers to increase their exports, regional clustering of customers to promote Alberta manufacturing, development meetings with target export customers and lowering both the company's and their customer's operating costs.

The company hasn't looked back since, pushing forward to develop more cost-effective freight routing and establish

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direct marketing through technical sales representatives. This latter measure has allowed AltaSteel to bypass agents in other countries and build lasting one-on-one relationships with customers. The result — a better understanding of the unique needs of its clients abroad and a competitive edge in the development of new products to meet these needs.

Partnerships with other western Canadian businesses and customers are also a vital part of AltaSteel's export success. The company participates indirectly through companies such as Alberta Oil Tool, Standen's Limited and MOLY-COP Canada in the export marketplace. This kind of teamwork increases access to markets for all parties, creates new opportunities for economic growth within a wider business context and builds international awareness of what Alberta and Canada have to offer.

AltaSteel remains steadfast in its efforts to minimize the environmental impact of its work. The company's steel-making process, which includes recycling scrap, reduces air emissions by 86 per cent, water pollution by 76 per cent and mining waste by 97 per cent.

The company has set an ambitious target of \$56.1 million in direct export sales by 2009. With a solid plan for ongoing expansion in place — a plan that includes an ongoing commitment to product innovation, partnerships and expansion into untapped markets — the company is well on its way to reaching this goal.

For more information about AltaSteel, visit [www.altasteel.com](http://www.altasteel.com).

Western Economic Diversification Canada congratulates AltaSteel for its creative and innovative export strategy that has helped put Alberta on the world map as a leader in business excellence in the steel industry. ♣

"Today...the dream has been fulfilled as AltaSteel produces high quality alloy steel from discarded automobiles, food cans, appliances, worn out drilling rigs, old farm machinery and many other cast-offs. That thousands of Albertans are employed recycling steel yet again into finished products by harnessing their natural gas, oil and wood is incredible.

We support the nomination of AltaSteel not only for their direct exports, but more importantly for their part in the competitive supply chain that leads to the two-thirds of our business that is exported around the globe."

Melvin H. Svendsen  
*President and CEO*  
*Standen's Limited*

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# INNOVATION

## Evoco Inc. – An Intelligent Building Success

by Barb Steele

Build more simply. This is the philosophy of **Evoco Ltd.**, a Calgary-based software developer specializing in online building management solutions that allow companies to manage more projects, more profitably.

Established in 1999, Evoco recognized the need for architectural, engineering and construction industries to share project information in a secure environment, regardless of the platform or technological capabilities. The company developed an intelligent technology solution that injects speed, accuracy and efficiency into these often traditional industries.

The company's online work centre connects suppliers, trades and contractors to up-to-date plans and critical project information. The ability of team members to make changes and share updates instantly, access CAD drawings without software and print plans are just a few benefits. By streamlining the build process, companies are able to reduce miscommunication and work more efficiently.

Evoco also realized there was a growing trend toward volume homebuilders and there was huge potential for its product in this U.S. market, but didn't have the right resources to make it happen. With the help of Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), Evoco was able to hire a University of Lethbridge graduate to help conduct market research and develop promotional and marketing materials for the U.S. market.

**Evoco -  
keeping your team  
connected.**

"WD's assistance has allowed us to broaden our marketing efforts and better understand the U.S. construction management landscape," said Alice Reimer, Evoco's VP Sales and Marketing. "Evoco is now a recognized leader in online solution providers for home builders."

Evoco attended the 2005 International Builders' Show in Orlando, Florida in January. The event, billed as the trade event powerful enough to match the energy and strength of today's home building industry, was a perfect opportunity for the company to showcase its intelligent technology. Attendees were able to book a personalized online demo and see firsthand the benefits of the Evoco solution.

The company has already established an impressive client list of over 10,000 users around the world. With the help of WD, Evoco is now building for success in the U.S. market.

For information about Evoco Inc., call 1-800-274-5250 or visit [www.evoco.com](http://www.evoco.com). ♦

For more info  
WD programs  
to assist exp  
[www.wd.gc.ca](http://www.wd.gc.ca)

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## Exploring Marketing Opportunities for the Forest Industry

by Barb Steele

At a time when the softwood lumber dispute with the U.S. has impacted on the Canadian lumber industry and all associated sectors, one non-profit Alberta organization has been gathering market intelligence and providing export assistance for the Canadian forestry suppliers and value-added wood product manufacturers indirectly hurt by the U.S. tariffs.

For more information about FISLA's services and services for exporters, visit [www.fisla.com](http://www.fisla.com) or [c.ca/export](http://www.fisla.com/c.ca/export).

The **Forest Industry Supplies and Logging Association (FISLA)** is an independent Canadian industry association devoted to the sustainable economic development of all forest industry sectors. Association members consist primarily of companies that provide goods and services (including logging) to the primary forest producers of lumber, pulp, paper, newsprint veneer, plywood, oriented strandboard, medium density fiberboards (MDF) and agri-fiber. FISLA also provides market support to Canadian valued-added and secondary wood manufacturers.

*It's our Business to help your Business...and the Forest Industry!* is FISLA's motto. With that in mind, Executive Director Ken Glover approached Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) for assistance to hire Blair Addison, a NAIT Business graduate. Addison helped them expand their Market Intelligence and Export Assistance Service into their target regions of the U.S., South America and the Pacific Rim.

The beneficiaries of FISLA's services are predominantly the small and medium-sized enterprises that have limited marketing and business development resources. The market intelligence that Addison pulls together helps generate business and market access for them.

Glover cited an example of a New York school division looking for a source of wooden desks and shelving — a Request for Proposals posted on a N.Y. procurement site. While any company can find opportunities on Web sites like MERX and Virtual Trade, FISLA saves companies time and money by forwarding only relevant business leads to them.

"Western Economic Diversification Canada's assistance has helped our association, our member Canadian companies and the graduates exposed to quality training," commented Glover. "WD has been instrumental in enhancing our ability to deliver programs and services to Canada's forest industry."

For more information about the services offered by FISLA, call (780) 489-5900 or visit [www.fisla.com](http://www.fisla.com). 🍁



## WOWtown: A Child's Journey into the World Close By

by Lorne Perry  
Calgary Science Centre

Enter the doors of **WOWtown** and watch the look of fascination spread across the faces of excited children. High overhead, in the Urban Crawl play structure, children hang right side up, others upside down. Groups of kindergarten kids build an ambitious red brick tower in the Construction Zone. And, at Curiosity Central, laughter fills the air as children view their own hair through a hand-held video microscopy unit.

In total, there are 25 experiential, learner-driven exhibits integrated into the new children's exploration gallery at the **Calgary Science Centre**. A mix of old and new exhibits engages children on many levels. They have been created to ensure that all children can successfully participate.



*Opened in November 2003, WOWtown features playful murals, a smiling sun and movable, kid-operated clouds, and so much more!*

*Photo courtesy of the Calgary Science Centre.*

WOWtown's success is attributed to extensive consultation with the community, schools, parents and, of course, the children.

A close-knit team of designers and science communicators ensured that multi-sensory learning concepts and Alberta's school curricula were built directly into the design.

According to Fraser Mustard, founding president of the Canadian Institute of Advanced Research, enriched learning and discovery experiences (like those received in WOWtown) at a very early age, profoundly impact young people's ability to confidently embrace science and mathematics throughout their school careers. These young people are much more likely to adopt careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Operating at near capacity during the spring and summer seasons, WOWtown has helped to increase the Centre memberships by 45 per cent, and attendance is up 19 per cent since the exhibit opened. Surveys indicate increased visitor satisfaction, and teachers rave about the high levels of engagement and complementary learning. With such a positive response from the community, we can surely expect to see a new generation of young minds engaged in the sciences.

The \$1 million project was funded through the **Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Program**, with approximately half the project costs coming from the federal and provincial governments, and additional funding coming from the City of Calgary and the Calgary Science Centre Society. In Alberta, Western Economic Diversification Canada and Alberta Transportation implement the infrastructure program.♣

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## ASTech Invites Nominations for 2005 S&T Awards

by Jason Darrah  
ASTech Communications Chair

Across Alberta, innovators in science and technology are making discoveries each day that improve the lives of all Canadians and help grow our regional economies. These scientists, researchers and community leaders have often eluded the public spotlight while their work has continued to lead global advancements in areas ranging from primary resource sectors to cutting-edge technologies in the new knowledge economy.

For 15 years, the **Alberta Science and Technology Leadership (ASTech) Foundation** has worked to generate recognition for these deserving individuals and organizations.

The annual **ASTech Awards** are unique in Canada for celebrating the outstanding achievements and contributions in science and technology by individuals, businesses and institutions across multiple sectors.

"There are many exciting developments coming out of our province, all of which contribute to the advancement of our social and economic prosperity," says Guy Mallabone, chair of the ASTech Leadership Foundation. "Since 1989, ASTech has taken a lead in honouring Alberta's brightest minds and rising stars. The ASTech Awards allow us to share the impact their work is having on the future of our province and the lives of all Canadians."

The Foundation is now accepting nominations for the ASTech Awards in over 10 categories. The deadline for nominations is June 30, 2005.

The annual ASTech Awards will be held at Calgary's Hyatt Regency Hotel on October 14. As Alberta's premier award program for science and technology, over 1,000 business, government, research and educational institutions, media and community leaders annually attend the black-tie gala to honour deserving innovators in a range of disciplines. In addition, \$98,000 in financial support was awarded to finalists and recipients in 2004.

The ASTech Foundation is a private, non-profit society comprised of 20 forward-looking organizations from the private and public sectors. As a patron organization, Western Economic Diversification Canada is active in identifying and celebrating science and technology excellence. These efforts help attract and retain high-quality researchers, scientists, innovators and commercial ventures in order to maintain Alberta's competitive edge.

Details on the awards categories and information on how to submit a nomination are available on the ASTech Web site at [www.atech.ab.ca](http://www.atech.ab.ca). ♦



**ASTech  
AWARDS**

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# Marketing Canada — Lac La Biche Region a Tourism Success

by Kal Polturak

*General Manager, Lac La Biche Regional Community Development Corporation*

Establishing a marketing plan on a small budget is a challenge. But the **Lac La Biche Regional Community Development Corporation (RCDC)** did just that, producing a Tourism Marketing Plan for the Lac La Biche Region. They like to think that if the tourist is already on the road, what's a few more kilometres to experience something new!

The marketing plan recently won a **2004 Marketing Canada Award** in the Promotional Campaign category for economic development budgets less than \$200,000. The award was presented during the **Economic Developers Association of Canada's** 36<sup>th</sup> National Conference in October 2004.

The marketing plan promotes the Lac La Biche Region as a tourism destination. It consists of print literature, including a visitors guide, postcard, regional map and magazine advertising; exhibiting at tourism trade shows; radio, television and billboard advertising; and a Web site — [www.laclabicheregion.ab.ca](http://www.laclabicheregion.ab.ca).

To stretch marketing dollars, the RCDC undertook cooperative activities with tourism operators who wanted to advertise in recreation publications, and joined forces with neighbouring municipalities to cross promote the respective communities.

The promotional effort concentrates on the Alberta marketplace, but the whole

world has become a market thanks to the Internet.

Web statistics show an increased number of visitors after every advertising campaign, whether it was print, television or radio. People are responding and looking the region up.

While Canadian visitors to the Web site have increased over the years, U.S. visitors have increased by 62 per cent from the 2002/03 to 2003/04 tourism seasons. European visitors increased by 91 per cent over the same time period, and Asian visits more than doubled! Not only do they visit the Web site, they visit the community as well. Tourism operators reported annual increases in tourist traffic and revenues.

The Lac La Biche RCDC Board of Directors believe this initiative assists small and medium-sized enterprises in a very substantive manner and is a worthwhile endeavour.

While the marketing plan was developed by the RCDC, the project was a joint effort with the Town of Lac La Biche, Lakeland County and 40 local businesses and organizations.

For more information about the Lac La Biche RCDC, call 1-877-623-9696 or visit [www.rcdc-rerc.com](http://www.rcdc-rerc.com). 🍁



Graphic courtesy of Lac La Biche RCDC.