

## **Alberta CARE 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference**

Slave Lake, Sept-4-6 2013

By Dominique Vrolyk

On September 4th 2013, municipal leaders, waste management operators and commercial recyclers converged on the Slave Lake Inn & Conference Centre to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference of Alberta CARE, a noteworthy leader in the field of Recycling and Waste Management.

From the first moments of this conference, participants expressed their excitement –and emotion- at visiting and touring the Town of Slave Lake, a thriving municipality that survived a ravaging fire in May 2011 and through its innovative steps of recovery, became a global champion of Recycling.

One hundred and fifty CARE members and other guests were treated to informative sessions, tours of the area and a round of golf at the superb Gilwood Golf Course; a small group had reserved their spots to enjoy a memorable afternoon of fishing on Lesser Slave Lake.

Alberta is a proven global leader in the field of Recycling. From wood waste to plastics, solar energy to tires, it is a world of fascinating technology that offers endless possibilities to consumers, policy makers and innovative industry leaders. Elected officials were on hand to welcome Alberta CARE conference participants in the morning of Wednesday September 4<sup>th</sup>, the first full day of conference sessions. Tyler Warman, Mayor of Slave Lake and a local businessman, expressed his pride in what this municipality has accomplished so far to 'rebuild' the devastated areas.

At the time of the fire, Karina Pillay-Kinnee was Slave Lake's mayor, and she was a pillar of strength and inspiration for her residents. A few months ago, Ms Pillay-Kinnee took the first steps towards her dream to pursue a career in medicine, and is now enrolled in a Faculty of Medicine.

Long-time regional MLA Pearl Calahasen delivered emotional words of welcome and gratitude for Albertans' support. Her commitment and pride to see the quality of life restored in the affected region shone through her speech.

Denny Garrett, Reeve of Lesser Slave Lake River #124, stressed the need to pull resources together in a time of crisis.

These testimonies resonated strongly with the Alberta CARE conference participants, as Recycling is also a high-profile venture that requires critical team work and commitment, to create a healthy future for our environment and for the generations to come.

The first day of conference saw an expansive tour of DEUCE Disposal, a company devoted to recycling and processing various types of waste: from cardboard to steel, concrete to tires, their yard and large shop was well-organized and their general manager was an enthusiastic tour guide, his pride evident in describing the growth and expertise of this recycling entity.

That day also saw all conference participants traveling in large coaches to tour the Fire Disaster Areas where reconstruction is 80% completed, and the Lesser Slave Regional Landfill. The host and tour guide was Tom Moore, who spearheaded the recovery methods and procedures after the tragic fire of May 2011. Manager of the Lesser Slave Lake Waste Management Services Commission, Mr Moore is also Vice-Chair of Alberta CARE and a director of SWANA, another strong entity in the Recycling Industry: he is an articulate and passionate advocate of creative recycling who successfully demanded (and was granted) a second 'cell' when the existing landfill's longevity was threatened by the millions of tons of demolition and contaminated waste that suddenly made their way to 'his' regional landfill after the Slave Lake fires.

We heard that 4,200 fridges and freezers had to be sealed before being transported to the Lesser Slave Lake Landfill in May 2011, where tons of 'demolition' materials including concrete, contaminated wood and steel from destroyed homes and commercial buildings were disposed of. Mr Moore also shared about the Emergency Preparedness Plan that took weeks to design and publish, a generic plan that was subsequently made available online to other communities to read, learn from and possibly borrow! Two interesting points shared by Tom Moore -that can be applied to Recycling and other municipal policies- was "Cultivate your relationships, they will be critical in a time of crisis!" and "Make a list of equipment available in your region, this will be useful in a crisis".

On the first evening of the conference, beside an interesting trade-show featuring a variety of recycling enterprises, Alberta CARE hosted a **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet** that featured a "trip down memory lane". **Helen Rice**, a director of CARE, is in fact one of the two founders of this organisation (1993), formerly named Northern CARE, meaning Coordinated Action for Recycling Enterprises. She recalls how CARE was founded when it became evident that Northern communities needed critical support in getting recycling procedures and policies off the ground. Covering 74% of the landmass of Alberta but only hosting 10% of its population, Alberta's North faced great financial and logistical challenges in order to see Recycling become a viable reality. Thirty-seven communities initially signed up to this new recycling organisation, with the help of a government grant: ten years later, it became Alberta CARE when the provincial government decided that the entire province should be included, in order to make the organisation more viable. So without government grants, and gaining new members every year, Alberta CARE became self-sufficient, and thus started a decade of growth and successful initiatives!

Rob Smith is Alberta CARE's chairman: his dedication and hard work to this group is evident when he talks of the history of CARE, and how strong it has become, sharing innovation with landfill operators and elected officials so that recycling in this province can forge ahead and tackle current challenges. Recycling is a costly initiative: the operation costs (manpower and machinery) and the expenses of hauling waste from transfer stations to landfills and waste processors have increased with the years, so it is critical that landfill operators find ways to reduce these costs with out-of-the-box ideas!

Power is one of the major expenses for recycling facilities: Gordon Howell P. Eng. Of Howell & Mayhew Engineering Inc. was a presenter on how "Edson Goes Solar": the Edson Landfill Operations building and its "Take It Or Leave It" building (where household items and furniture are left for residents to pick up for free) are both off the grid, taking advantage of solar energy, a renewable and plentiful resource! It is not 'cheap' to process, however in the long run, solar electricity can save huge amounts of dollars for commercial operations and residential developments!

Dave Dietrich was Alberta Northern CARE's first executive director (now Alberta CARE): with obvious passion for this vital industry, he recalls that it was born under the leadership and encouragement of Ralph Klein, then Alberta Environment Minister. He adds that Helen Rice, a brilliant municipal strategist, encouraged the City of Grande-Prairie, its County and various municipalities to collaborate and cooperate to make Alberta a better province to live in. With thirty-seven members acquired one at a time, Alberta CARE had a laborious but dynamic start. Now a freelance consultant, having contributed to Slave Lake's after-the-fire recovery efforts, he shares this message to Alberta CARE's board of directors and its members: "Keep going, don't give up! There are more relationships to develop!". He also cites that the City of Edmonton is a leader in recycling technologies and procedures, exporting its expertise to other countries, including China; Grande-Prairie, an isolated community located 4.5 hours from the capital, forged ahead, and has now enlisted the efforts of other municipalities... four hours away!

Glen Finstad, a Councillor for the City of Leduc, shares that this conference has reinforced his belief that there are significant benefits to being a member of CARE. Networking with other elected officials waste management experts from across the province has opened his eyes on many recycling topics, and although the Leduc Regional Waste Management Commission was a CARE member for some time, he believes that becoming a CARE member is a strong

statement to his city's commitment to improve the city and region he lives in and serves. This feeling was expressed to this writer by several long-time CARE members.

Dr Richard Coleman, Mayor of the Town of Vegreville, was an articulate presenter, proud of his community receiving the FCM Sustainable Community Award, in the fields of brownfields, energy, neighborhood development, transportation, waste and water.

Many more recycling topics were addressed by presenters, trade-show exhibitors and the final day's Experts' Panel. Dirty Oil and its containers are recycled into highway guardrail posts, fencing, plastic pipe, steel rebar and many other products ([www.usedoilrecycling.com](http://www.usedoilrecycling.com)): wood can also be recycled (Alberta Wood Waste Recycling Association, [awwra.ca](http://awwra.ca)), and electronics, paint and tires are pulled out of the waste stream and now recycled in mind-boggling numbers in our province. Today, used plastic shopping bags can be remade into many new products, from new plastic shopping bags to plastic wood for decking, siding, waste receptacles, patio furniture and even park benches ([plastics.ca](http://plastics.ca)) In the past twenty years, Alberta has recycled over 4 million computers, 8 million litres of paint and an incredible 70 million tires. It is important for Alberta residents to consider the necessary steps for successful and cost-effective recycling: for example, aerosol paint cans must not be included in household waste, but rather isolated from regular paint containers directed to recycling sites.

Alberta CARE is tirelessly investigating recycling solutions and sharing the results and challenges with its members: municipal leaders, recycling operators and commercial producers have a mutual interest in developing new programs to protect our environment for future generations. Presentations at the Alberta CARE 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference will be shared on this website. The organisation is always open to enquiries and the offering of recycling methods and solutions.