

# THE GATEWAY

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RUNNING ON EMPTY Experts warn Alberta's environment cannot sustain the continually expanding oil development.

## Oil sands pumping problems: report

TOM WAGNER  
News Writer

In 2005, every Albertan received \$400 in the form of a prosperity bonus after high oil prices and increased production created a surplus in provincial coffers. Although many people enjoyed the extra cash, some say that there was a heavy environmental cost behind the \$1.4 billion program.

According to Simon Dyer, researcher for the University of Alberta's Pembina Institute and co-author of the report, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, Alberta is facing a serious environmental crisis due to oil sands development in the northern part of the province.

Many wide-ranging environmental concerns associated with the oil sands are discussed in the report, including the high usage of fresh water for mineral recovery and the possible regional extinction of many indigenous animal species. Dyer called attention to what he said the poor track record of oil companies in reclaiming affected land, and most alarmingly, a developed area the size of Florida, if all the available oil sands in Alberta are utilized.

"The anticipated impacts associated

with unconstrained oil sands development are so great that no further oil sands leases should be awarded or projects approved until a management plan is in place to protect the regional environment," read the report.

David Swann, Liberal MLA for Calgary Mountain View and the shadow minister for the environment, agrees with the report.

"[The government] has basically allowed for the whole [oil sands] area to be sacrificed," Swann remarked. "It's a moonscape type of image, a theme from outer space."

Both men agree the oil sands realistically could be more environmentally friendly through a slowing of development, the creation of protected areas for species in the affected areas, and increased levels of resource management by both the Alberta government and industry.

"Although the oil sands are extremely polluting, it is possible for companies to be carbon neutral if they invest in certain projects," Dyer explained. "However, the level of management needs to be at the level of magnitude."

But according to the Government of

Alberta's oil sands information website, every initiative is currently being taken to ensure that the procedure of extracting and processing the oil sands is done in the most economically efficient and environmentally friendly way possible.

"Working through the Alberta Energy Research Institute, the Alberta government is committed to a collaborative approach to spur new technology and innovation programs that will reduce the impact of greenhouse gases and other emissions, and reduce the consumption of water and gas," the website stated.

Nevertheless, though hopeful, Swann said that with the current government's track record, it appears they are content to do nothing at all.

"This government is itself addicted to oil. They're not prepared to slow down or change the way we do business up there," Swann said.

Swann and Dyer warned that if nothing is done, the costs will be steep. According to *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, the oil sands region—where boreal forest once stood—is on track to qualify as the world's largest open-pit mining complex.

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### One ski at a time

Edmontonians take to their skis to commemorate Birkebeiner warriors who saved a little prince 800 years ago.

FEATURE, PAGE 11



### Taste the rainbow

The Edmonton International BeerFest is going to be mighty colourful. Come taste the various shades of brown.

A&E, PAGE 12

(Student Life and Learning) at McGill University, said that McGill is calling for a gradual tuition increase over three years to match the national average.

"The current low tuition in Québec amounts to a government subsidy of the middle class and the upper-middle class," Mendelson said.

Mendelson and Mota agreed that there doesn't seem to be a correlation between low fees and high participation or completion rates. Indeed, Statistics Canada reported in 2001 that the most likely candidates to attend postsecondary in Canada were youth aged 18-24 whose parents were highly educated with incomes over \$100 000 annual; it was a long-term pattern at the time.

"There's no data anywhere that we've come across which shows any relationship between tuition rates and accessibility. None whatsoever," Mota said. "In fact, Québec has the lowest tuition rates in the country and [among the] lowest per capita attendance, whereas Nova Scotia has the highest tuition rates and has [among] the highest number of people attending, so there's no relationship that we can see between low tuition and accessibility."

Morton Mendelson, Deputy Provost

PLEASE SEE QUÉBEC • PAGE 2

## Students rally in SUB

SU representatives and featured guest speaker, Avi Lewis, mark Canada's National Day of Action

NATALIE CLIMENHAGA  
Senior News Editor

"Education is a right," "Grants NOT loans" and "Hey Alberta, where's my surplus," were just some of the messages students surrounding SUB stage held up on signs yesterday at noon.

**"In this province, you don't get what you need and you don't get what you deserve. You get what you fight for and, ultimately, you get what you settle for."**

**LARRY BOOI,  
PUBLIC INTEREST ALBERTA**

The University of Alberta Students' Union organized the lunchtime event to recognize the Canadian Federation of Students' National Day of Action, protesting high tuition fees. In the spirit of the day, many of the people in the

crowd donned free "Tuition Sucks" T-shirts and applauded enthusiastically while each of the presenters urged them to demand more support for Alberta's postsecondary system.

"In this province, you don't get what you need and you don't get what you deserve. You get what you fight for and, ultimately, you get what you settle for," Larry Booi from Public Interest Alberta told the attendees.

SU President Sam Power pointed to the recent 3.3 per cent tuition increase and 10 per cent residential rent increase as evidence that the issue of affordability isn't being addressed by the U of A's Board of Governors, the administrative body responsible for setting the University's budget, including the level of tuition fees.

"Individually, they're not bad people, but for some reason, when [the members of the Board of Governors] get together, they seem to make bad decisions," Power said, adding that since the funding cutbacks in the 1990s, students have continually had to bear the burden of the U of A's escalating operating costs.

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