

# Youth urged to shape energy future

BY DINA O'MEARA, CALGARY HERALD JUNE 12, 2009



Pierce Riemer of the World Petroleum Council says the rapid pace of change will challenge industry.

**Photograph by:** Leah Hennel, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald

Regulatory uncertainty and accelerated climate change present some of the largest challenges to the global energy industry, with new thinking needed to address them, a panel of experts said in Calgary.

The sheer scale of change in the world is the biggest challenge facing all industries, and in particular the energy sector, said Pierce Riemer, director general of the World Petroleum Council.

Even with the recession dampening demand, global consumption of oil is a whopping 83 million barrels per day, Riemer told an audience at the International Student Energy Summit on Thursday.

"In China and India alone, over 500 million people will move out of poverty over the next 20 years," he said. "The world has no experience of industrialization of this scale."

An aging workforce, public calls for zero-emission energy sources, and meeting political, economic and social expectations associated with energy development also present challenges to the industry, he noted.

Approximately 350 university students from North America, Asia, Europe and Latin America came to the Telus Convention Centre to participate in the summit, which included breakout sessions with expert speakers on issues facing the industry, breaking into the energy sector and the challenges of implementing change.

"There's a real uncertainty around what the future looks like," said Jason Switzer, sustainability adviser with En-Can Corp. "Climate could be radically different. The big economic collapse of the banking sector has really changed what the future looks like for us, and we don't have a sense of certainty anymore."

A positive aspect of people now exiting university and entering the industry as economists,

environmental consultants, engineers and scientists is they bring with them new visions for existing technologies and an openness to adopt new ones, he said.

"The most urgent issue is finding an economic balance between growth and supply," said Tim Dubbeling, an economics student from the Netherlands.

"It's not as simple as finding renewable energy because we're going to use fossil fuels as long as we have them," said Dubbeling.

"There are so many things to consider."

Canadian energy companies have to grapple with lack of regulatory clarity around environmental issues, said ConocoPhillips spokesman Bob Mitchell.

"My group within the company is responsible for finding the opportunity that a carbon-constrained future provides us and find opportunities to position ourselves to prosper in that carbon-constrained future," Mitchell, manager of climate change, business development and strategic planning, said. "It's hard to do that when you don't know what the rules are."

Alberta has had a carbon emissions policy in place for large emitters since 2007, but the federal government has vacillated on policy for years, announcing a vague carbon emissions credit scheme Wednesday that lacked standards for monitoring or verifying, as well as any pricing scenario.

In addition, a summit on global climate change in Copenhagen this December could result in major policy shifts around the world.

For industrial engineering student Sandra Chavez, the summit presented a means to create a global network of like-minded people to address energy and the environment. Mexico faces a huge problem with pollution, but also needs to address pressing issues of poverty and violence, she said.

German business student Ralf Ott agreed, adding one of the biggest challenges is to develop renewable energy sources and make them applicable and acceptable in developing countries.

"We all have to co-operate, because climate change is a global issue," he said.

© Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald