

# Let it Flow. The Flow of Business.

David Mitrovica

*As part of this year's convention, a series of sessions addressing wider business, environmental and social issues have been included. David Mitrovica<sup>1</sup>, P. Geoph., the lead organizer of these sessions responds, in this article, to the reasons behind the sessions and the importance and relevance to the geoscientist.*

## David, what was the genesis of these sessions?

These sessions were the result of the insight and leadership of John Varsek and John Townsley, the general co-chairs of the convention. They understood that the increasingly complex environment in which geoscientists work raises new challenges that need to be addressed.

## And, how did you become involved?

During the first half of my career, I worked as an exploration geophysicist. I am now employed as a recruitment specialist focused on the exploration and production sector. As I made the transition, I became increasingly interested and engaged in wider social and environmental issues and their impact on our industry. In order to explore these issues more fully and in a more inclusive manner, I created the fgl society- Canada's civic forum on corporate social and environmental responsibility (CSR). In 2001, the fgl society organized and hosted the first national forum on CSR. The event attracted senior representatives from business, government and not-for-profit organizations as well as an enormously diverse range of delegates. The fgl society has since organized forums on topics as wide as globalization, competitiveness and innovation, aboriginal-corporate partnerships, and human rights.

In many ways, the sessions I am involved in at Let it Flow are an extension of my previous work. At the same time, the event allows me to engage with an audience who, it may be argued, is not as fully involved as it might be or should be, in the issues being discussed.

## You've attracted quite the roster of industry leaders. What does this signal to you?

It signals the importance to which industry leaders attach to the issues being addressed. I think it would be wise to listen and to heed their views. Clive Mather, President and Chief Executive Officer, Shell Canada; Ken Georgetti, O.C., Commissioner, Canadian Democracy and Corporate Accountability Commission (as well as President, Canadian Labour Congress); Michael Doyle, President, Canadian Association of Geophysical Contractors and Suzanne Gauthier, Human Resources Manager, MEG Energy are some of our speakers.

## What are the issues being discussed?

Under the broad title of 'The Flow of Business', they are carbon and energy management, stakeholder engagement and expertise or employment.

## These are fairly broad topics. What links them?

In short, it is risk, of which geoscientists are intimately involved.

The proposition today is very simple. Risk and reputation are far less about financial performance though we must have this. Nor are they

about technical performance though skills and vitally important. They are about impact on people, the physical environment, communities and human rights. The challenge is to avoid reputation damage to companies we have sometimes seen.

Increasing social expectations are re-defining the terms of our industry's license to operate. Geoscientists have a major role to play in ensuring that our industry meets these expectations and that it is a recognized contributor to shared economic success and to strong, inclusive and cohesive communities. Nothing short of the future of the companies for which geoscientists work is at stake.

## And, what of the specific sessions?

As regards carbon and energy management, the first of the three, I will say this. Climate change or global warming is an issue, which is seen as relevant, and the observance of this in practice is an increasingly important condition of the license to operate. This session addresses energy supply, environmental sustainability and climate change as well as some of the major drivers of change in our industry. It also highlights the unique responsibility and role of the geoscientist in responding to these changes.

The second session is on stakeholder engagement. Good business is tough. It's about understanding, anticipating and leading societal and market trends around the world – effectively, efficiently, fairly and transparently. This requires smart external engagement – with the right people on the right issues. And, strong internal responses – the ability to calibrate risk and opportunity, motivate behaviour and performance, resolve dilemmas and innovate – to build trust and leadership today and for the future. Who better to be at the forefront of such an important role than geoscientists? It is their ideas and actions that initiate and shape oil and gas industry development.

Lastly, expertise or employment. Labour shortages are an increasing concern, if not the primary issue for many employers in the burgeoning oil and gas sector. Labour shortages are anticipated to become more severe over the next decade and to be the greatest constraint to business growth and diversification. In addition to the shortage of labour are, as I've previously said, the ever-increasing demands being placed on companies by diverse stakeholders. Such a situation requires skills which embrace both technical and soft skills.

For organizations, this session provides an opportunity to use the knowledge to recruit, develop and retain a competitive workforce – the only truly long-term competitive advantage and the key to future success.

For the individual geologist and geophysicist, it's a chance to learn what s/he needs to know to make the career choices that are right for you – now and tomorrow.

*I wish you all the best and I look forward to attending these sessions. R*

<sup>1</sup> The comments and views expressed herein are the sole opinion of David Mitrovica and not necessarily an expression of those of the CSEG, CSPG, RECORDER or representatives thereof.