

## Biorefining Conversions Network gaining momentum

Delegates attending the 2nd annual BCN Strategic Retreat in Banff Alberta last November were informed of the exciting developments happening in the Bioconversions Network, headed by AFNS researcher David Bressler and funded in part by Alberta Innovates Bio-Solutions under CEO Stan Blade.

The retreat opened with an address by Alberta's then deputy premier, Doug Horner, who set a positive tone for the retreat as he conveyed an extremely encouraging outlook on the future of the bio-industrial sector.

The event was attended by 125 delegates including senior industry representatives and government officials as well as expert researchers from Alberta, across Canada, the US, and Europe. In addition to widespread representation from the forestry, agriculture, oil and gas, and chemical manufacturing sectors, there was a notable presence of smaller renewable energy companies and technology developers.

After observing the results that Bressler and his team have already achieved, industry leaders were quick to get on board and collaborate. Gas additives that increase fuel efficiency, along with plastics and biological oils that reduce pollutant levels, have all been synthesized from biological, environmentally friendly, renewable products such as seed oil and animal by-products, reducing the need for conventional petroleum.

"We've got a whole portfolio of products coming online," said Bressler. "We're getting more participation from the forestry sector and the energy sector. Everybody is interested in being a part of what's happening, so it's a really cool time right now."

Since his appointment in 2003, Bressler has worked in close collaboration with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as the Bio-Industrial Technologies division, headed by Connie Phillips (Divisional Director), and Team Alberta, a collection of leaders from various Government of Alberta ministries. His diverse background in cell biotechnology, fermentation and chemical engineering is helping to bring together stakeholders who were previously hesitant to collaborate for fear that they might lose their competitive edge in their respective fields.

"The fact that my position is joint appointed with the provincial government means that I've always had a strong industry development tie," he said. "They came to me as somebody that could speak different languages, academically, and had a history of working with industry, and asked me to put together a network within the province."

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The Hon. Doug Horner,  
former Deputy Premier  
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