

Ontario Centres of Excellence Hosts Workshop at the Canadian Ecology Centre

By John Pineau

On Monday, March 20th and Tuesday, March 21st, 2006, close to 60 scientists and researchers and forestry professionals and workers participated in a workshop at the Canadian Ecology Centre entitled ***Integrating New Technology with Forest Operations***. The event was made possible through the generous sponsorship of the Ontario Centres of Excellence – Centre for Earth and Environmental Technologies, represented by Mr. Richard Worsfold.

The focus for the workshop was a rigorous exploration of new and relevant technologies and tools that are becoming available to improve forest management and forestry operations. Scientists and researchers from a number of Ontario universities including Queens, Toronto, York, Guelph, Trent and Carleton were on hand to present and demonstrate specific leading edge technology being studied and prepared for use in forest inventory, forestry data collection, operations, and planning. The event also provided the opportunity for direct and hands-on trial and basic training in various technologies, and allowed discussion and debate on the application of specific new technologies, and their ultimate practicality and economics with respect to forestry. Presentations included an exploration of micro-satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles in forestry, camera and other sensors, LiDAR (light detection and ranging radar), and light reflectance-analysis for tree identification and forest classification.

“The workshop surpassed our expectations,” said Mr. Worsfold. “Not only did we get excellent updates on the many different projects currently underway through the Ontario Centres of Excellence and the Forestry Research Partnership, but we also catalyzed new opportunities for partnerships and some solid ideas for forestry research and development projects that we can help to initiate and fund.”

The workshop also included a vendor session, with nine different companies participating. Items presented or demonstrated by these vendors covered state of the art Global Positioning Systems, remote sensing technology, and specialized software for imagery and terrain model interpretation in 3D. The Forestry Research Partnership (FRP) was also well represented through presentations on its state of the art forest inventory related projects with Tembec, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and many other partners.

“Our affiliation with the Forestry Research Partnership continues to grow and mature,” said Mr. Worsfold. The Partnership has a reputation for getting things done, and getting new forest science into use. Our organization is pleased to be working with the FRP through several universities on a number of projects, and we hope to add many more. Our goal is to create business opportunities in Ontario, and to commercialize new science as quickly as possible.”

The Ontario Centres of Excellence were founded in 1987 and consist of five individual Centres:

- Centre for Energy
- Centre for Communications and Information Technology
- Centre for Earth and Environmental Technologies
- Centre for Materials and Manufacturing
- Centre for Photonics

Collectively, the Centres promote the economic development of Ontario through directed research, commercialization of technology and training for highly qualified personnel. The Centres are among the few publicly funded institutions that systematically integrate and manage connections from university to marketplace to ensure the successful application of innovative science and technology to profitable new businesses. For more information about the Ontario Centres of Excellence, visit their website at www.occ-ontario.org.