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For Immediate Release

Canadian-Dutch High Tech Consortium to Tackle Oil and Gas Environmental and Innovation Challenges

The improvement of recovery rates and environmental impacts for the North American oil and gas industry are the focus of a new international consortium established today to develop and deploy leading-edge technologies. The consortium will wed Canadian enhanced oil recovery knowhow with Dutch high technology development; the potential economic impact through incremental increases in oil production could be in the billions of dollars.

Canadian oil fields, particularly those in Eastern Alberta and Western Saskatchewan that experience very low recovery rates, high waste water production from reservoirs, and other environmental and production issues, are main targets of the consortium. With Saskatchewan's two universities and research council experienced in the development of processes to help address these issues, tapping into that knowledge will be crucial for taking these state-of-the-art sensing and control technologies – which have been successfully deployed to identify problems in other industrial processes – to unique oilfield situations.

“Of Saskatchewan’s 45 billion barrels of oil reserves, some 25 billion are heavy oil deposits that are very difficult to exploit,” noted Malcolm Wilson, CEO of the Petroleum Technology Research Centre. “We know that recovery rates average 8% in heavy oil fields. Even here, recovery increases by producing sand along with the oil. This leaves holes in the reservoir that we need to understand better in order to recover more of the oil. Sensors will help us do this. We already illustrated in a field trial late in 2012 that Dutch microsensors can travel successfully through heavy oil formations and potentially help identify the location of those gaps.”

The creation of the consortium is the culmination of a two-day road-mapping workshop hosted by the PTRC/INCAS³ Innovation Centre (PI Innovation Centre for short) which included several research partners in the workshop – the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan, the University of Groningen, Eindhoven University of Technology, and the Saskatchewan Research Council (along with input from select oil and gas companies). The workshop helped to identify key opportunities for improving recoveries and reducing environmental impacts of oil production.

“The economic prize for Canada in the application of these new technologies is enormous. Even an increase in production from Saskatchewan’s heavy oil reservoirs from 8 to 15% would mean two billion more barrels of oil produced annually, or at today’s rate, almost 200 billion dollars in economic impact,” said Dr. Wilson.

The newly created consortium will develop work plans and projects that will facilitate collaboration between all partners, in both Europe and Canada, and will establish dedicated funding for development and deployment (RD&D) activities leading to commercial applications.

The signing ceremony creating the new consortium was held on February 1st at the PTRC building in Regina, Canada, and included MLA for Regina Walsh Acres Mr. Warren Steinley attending on behalf of the Saskatchewan Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources, Dr. Dennis Fitzpatrick (Vice President of Research from the University of Regina), Dr. James Basinger (Associate Vice President of Research at the University of Saskatchewan), Professor Sibrand Poppema (President of the University of Groningen), Professor Hans van Duijn (Rector Magnificus of the Eindhoven University of Technology), Dr. Laurier Schramm (President and CEO, Saskatchewan Research Council), and representatives from Innovation Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Ministry of the Economy, and the PI Innovation Centre.

“The University of Regina is excited to be part of this consortium,” said Dr. Vianne Timmons, President. “International collaborations such as this provide important opportunities to enhance the engineering and technological research being done at Saskatchewan’s universities, while helping realize environmental and economic benefits in our province and around the world.”

“The Dutch Top Sector policy is all about creating sustainable economic growth by aligning industry and social challenges with university research. This initiative provides an excellent opportunity to do so in an international context.” noted Professor Van Duijn.

About the PI Innovation Centre

The Petroleum Technology Research Centre (PTRC) – INCAS³ Innovation Centre (PI for short) is a not-for-profit research collaboration between two of the premier R&D organizations from North America and Europe. The PTRC conducts research into improving the efficiencies and environmental impacts of oil recovery in Canada and the world. INCAS³ develops sensor technologies for monitoring industrial processes, infrastructures and environmental monitoring. The synergies were recognized between the two companies through initial meetings in 2011, and in 2012 both came together to create PI – specifically to develop sensor technologies to help the oil and gas industries become more efficient and extract resources using less energy and with fewer environmental impacts.

For more information, please contact:

Norm Sacuta
Communications Manager
Petroleum Technology Research Centre
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada
S4S 3C5
306.787.7497
norm.sacuta@ptrc.ca

Yvonne van den Berg
Communications Officer
INCAS³
Dr. Nassaulaan 9 / P.O. Box 797 / 9400 AT
Assen, The Netherlands
+31 (0) 592 860 000
yvonnevandenber@incas3.eu