

"If you look at the top ten performing stocks of last year, the ones that are doing very well, five or six of them are life science companies. Because people still get sick, people still need to be treated. People, if they have an additional dollar, probably want to spend it on a quality of life. So these are companies that I expect will continue to do well despite the economic meltdown."

~ Juan Enriquez in Edmonton, 2009

By Cheryl Croucher

Life sciences are the underpinning of the new economy. This is a view espoused by American venture capitalist and life sciences guru Juan Enriquez and it's a pillar of the new innovation framework the provincial government is formulating.

It's the kind of talk that puts a smile on Ryan Radke's face. As president of BioAlberta, his job is to both promote and support the development of a life sciences industry in the province.

"We realize—and I think the current government realizes—that oil will not sustain Alberta forever. We do need to diversify the economy. And I think life sciences, ICT, some of these innovative sectors are ways we can diversify our economy. But we need to set the groundwork so these industries can be successful."

Established in 1999, BioAlberta is an industry association representing over a hundred life sciences companies in

Alberta. Their interests cover the full gamut of biotechnology.

Alberta's life sciences sector is rooted in the research of pioneers like Dr. Ray Lemeix, Dr. Bob Church, and Dr. Tony Noujaim. And Radke credits the creation of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research in the 1980s by Premier Peter Lougheed as critical to the evolution of the industry.

"That drove a lot of innovation, a lot of research within this province and funded a lot of opportunities at the university that later spun out into companies."

Radke now sees a diversification from the traditional 'drugs-and-bugs' perspective of biotechnology into applications that impact every aspect of our lives. "What we've seen probably in the last five years



Ryan Radke

BRIEFS



Ken Bautista and Jason Suriano

On-line products cash in at VenturePrize competition



Gordon McKinley

FAST GROWTH WINNER
The prize for the 2009 TEC VenturePrize Business Plan Competition goes to a start-up company with an educational, web-based children's game.

CIE:SeekYourOwnProof.com is the brainchild of Ken Bautista and his partner Jason Suriano. The two young entrepreneurs parlayed their backgrounds in education, history and museums into a game that is rooted in spy chasing and sleuthing. Kids register on-line to play with cyber agents at the Central Institute for Exploration—CIE—and their sleuthing territory is the hidden treasures of our museums.

Bautista believes the company has huge potential for growth. "Our big market is going to be kids in the States. There are 10 times as many kids in the U.S. than there are in Canada. And so part of our market strategy now is keying on major cities in the U.S. that do have a large concentration of museums... a lot of young 10 to 13 year olds who are interested in becoming agents there. And so we think there is a lot of growth potential because there are 11,000 museums in the U.S. alone."

Bautista says the \$90,000 award in cash and services the company receives for winning the VenturePrize Fast Growth category will go toward marketing CIE: SeekYourOwnProof.com

STUDENT WINNER
Pets are great except when you have to travel. And it's not always easy finding a kennel to look after Fido at the last minute.

Well, that may soon change with the creation of KennelSeek.com.

This Internet based reservation system for pets is the invention of student entrepreneur Gordon McKinley. And it's the winner of the 2009 TEC VenturePrize Business Plan Competition for Students.

McKinley estimates, "The online market is a \$100-billion market in U.S. and Canada, so the growth is almost unlimited, really. And then the pet care

provider market is \$3.5-billion a year—so yeah, the sky's the limit."

McKinley is taking a Masters of Engineering degree at the University of Calgary. His business plan beat out student competitors from across Alberta. He believes entering VenturePrize competition helped him hone his business and presentation skills. "We had a boot camp and had lots of training doing that. Without all that training, I definitely would not have won the competition."

McKinley says he will use the \$6,000 prize to develop more features for his KennelSeek.com service. ✓

~ Cheryl Croucher