

RED DEER ADVOCATE

## Environmental testing lab opens

By Harley Richards - Red Deer Advocate

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1 Comment

Worried about contaminants in your well water? Suspicious that your crops are being deprived of key nutrients?

If you live in Central Alberta, you've probably had to rely on chemical analysis in Edmonton or Calgary to address such concerns. But that's changed with the opening of an environmental testing lab in Red Deer.

Central Labs Ltd. analyzes water, soil and other materials for agricultural, oilfield and domestic clients. Such services are needed in the Red Deer region, said Mitch Golay, business development consultant with the privately-owned lab.

Previously, he explained, local samples were typically sent elsewhere for testing. This increased the cost and the likelihood of damage or spoilage during transit.

In the case of bacteria testing, added Golay, water samples must reach the lab within 30 hours.

Reliance on out-of-town facilities sometimes made this a challenge.

Golay, who previously worked at Environment Canada's National Hydrology Research Centre in Saskatoon and has spent the past decade doing environmental testing for the oilfield industry, believes Central Labs is well-positioned to take advantage of a growing industry.

"Environmental concerns right now are the hottest topic out there, I think. And people are becoming more and more concerned about what are they drinking, what are they breathing."

In addition to voluntary testing, individuals and companies are often compelled to obtain lab tests by regulatory authorities like Alberta Environment or the Energy Resources Conservation Board, said Golay. For instance, oilfield waste material must be checked before it is disposed, and water wells near coalbed methane drilling is now often analyzed.

Water testing might look at turbidity, alkalinity, mineral concentrations and a bacteriological analysis. In the case of soil, tests might consider chemical composition and physical characteristics like texture and moisture content.

Soil testing can be an important tool for farmers, said Golay.

By measuring the concentration of nitrogen, potassium, phosphate, calcium, magnesium and other nutrients, they can determine what inputs should be added and which are unnecessary.

Working in more than one industry should help ensure Central Labs' client base is diversified and it's not vulnerable to downturns in specific sectors, like the oilpatch, he said.

Golay, who was based in Calgary, estimates that about 80 per cent of his work was previously done within 150 km of Red Deer. That fact, and his desire to live in a smaller city, convinced him to move to Central Alberta.

Golay currently has two other staff members at Central Labs, and expects this number to grow as demand for his company's services increase.

Central Labs is located at No. 10, 6874 52nd Ave. and its website can be found at [www.c-labs.ca](http://www.c-labs.ca).

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Mitch Golay, Central Labs Business Development Manager uses an analytical balance machine to prepare the calibrations standards for a water test at Central Labs.

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