

Windsor is 'beachfront' location for solar business, says entrepreneur

BY DAVE HALL, THE WINDSOR STAR AUGUST 23, 2009

true



Tanja Muske of GreenSun Rising displays a photo voltaic panel, right, and a flat-plate solar heat collector, left, at the company's Kildare Road building Saturday.

Photograph by: NICK BRANCACCIO, The Windsor Star

WINDSOR, Ont. -- Windsor is perfectly positioned to become the centre of Ontario's solar and alternative energy sector, according to a local entrepreneur who is opening a new retail and training centre in a former tool and die plant.

"From a solar energy standpoint, Windsor is the equivalent of beachfront property," said Klaus Dohring, owner of GreenSun Rising. "We're the southernmost county in the province and we have the population base to provide sufficient consumers to make this investment financially feasible."

Dohring hopes to open the Renewable Energy Training Centre within two months which he calls a perfect collaboration between the region's tool and die sector, which has fueled past and present economies, with new alternative energy technology.

Dohring is leasing a portion of the former Windsor Tool & Die plant at 1680 Kildare Rd. and renovating it into a showroom, retail store, office and training centre with plans to add a manufacturing component should market conditions warrant it.

"We want to open a business where people can see-touch-feel our products," said Dohring.

With investment and co-operation from Max Ofner, who owns the tool plant and also owns and operates Manor Tool & Die, Dohring hopes to launch his new business venture within two months.

"We couldn't have done it without co-operation from our landlord," said Dohring. "He's doing his part to help us get launched and we're doing ours."

Dohring has taken a portion of the building which he's in the process of separating into a customer showroom and retail store. He's also establishing a training centre for tradespeople and others interested in the new technology and how to install it correctly.

"It's a brand new trade and it will need a new breed of tradespeople," said Dohring. "If you don't install this technology correctly, it won't function efficiently."

He's already held one training session which drew tradespeople from as far away as the Toronto area and more are planned in the future.

By next year, Dohring expects the building to be equipped with rooftop solar panels and biomass boilers so that will be self-sustaining and carbon neutral over 12 months.

"There may well be months when we use more power than we produce and months when we produce more than we need but the overall goal is to reach net zero over 12 months," said Dohring. "This technology shows how we can move towards self-sustaining, carbon-neutral energy systems for both residential, commercial and industrial customers."

Dohring has also entered into a partnership with Manor Tool and Germany-based Huch, a storage tank manufacturer, to produce solar storage tanks locally. A second partnership with German-based scn Energy AG will eventually produce photovoltaic solar systems.

But he's still looking for similar partnerships and investment so he can manufacture solar panels and photovoltaic panels locally as well.

"Our commitment, once a market has been established, is to localize production because it is simpler and less expensive than to import the panels," said Dohring. "In addition, it has the potential to produce employment."

In the meantime, Dohring plans to operate the training centre on his own but eventually plans to hire as many as 10 people when the business is established.

© Copyright (c) The Windsor Star