

Green technology gains momentum in Windsor

Partners to build solar storage tanks

By Monica Wolfson, The Windsor Star, June 29, 2009

Windsor's aspiration to become a hub of green technology has been boosted by a German company's decision to join with two local firms to start manufacturing solar storage tanks locally.

The partnership could create as many as 50 skilled manufacturing jobs over the next two years, said Patrick Persichilli, vice-president of the WindsorEssex Development Commission. The deal was envisioned by Rakesh Naidu, a WEDC staff member who went to a green technology trade show in Germany last month.

The collaboration involves Green Sun Rising, a Windsor-based supplier of solar thermal collectors and renewable-based heating systems, Oldcastle-based Manor Tool & Die, which has mostly made prototypes and tool and dies for the automotive industry, and Huch, a German storage tank manufacturer.

The deal calls for Manor to manufacture the storage tanks with Green Sun Rising and Huch providing sales and engineering services.

The alliance is a perfect example of how local tool and die companies can use existing resources to manufacture green industry products, Persichilli said. "There is a tremendous opportunity. It's huge given the rising energy costs in North America. We are trying to position Windsor and Essex County for a piece of that manufacturing market."

Thomas Huch, managing partner of Huch, said Essex County has the perfect conditions to establish a foothold in the green technology market in North America. The area has good solar weather, a skilled labour force and good partners.

Klaus Dohring, owner of Green Sun Rising, said Windsor also has infrastructure and a manufacturing base, key factors missing from more sunny locales in North America.

Dohring said he sees Windsor as being well-situated to take advantage of the green technology marketplace, which he thinks is on the verge of exploding.

"It's a job-creating machine and it keeps jobs local," Dohring said.

The green technology advocates believe the rising cost of energy and utilities, growing public support for tackling climate change and an interest in "doing the right thing," will propel consumers to select green products.

While upfront costs may seem daunting, a consumer can make back the cost of a solar storage tank in six to seven years if it's replacing an electric-heat water tank. It would take 12 to 14 years if it's taking the place of a natural gas-heated hot water tank. Commercial users can see quicker savings. The tanks have a lifespan of 25 to 40 years.

"Some people don't believe we live in a place to harness solar energy," Naidu said.

"The public doesn't think so because they don't have the information. Even in the winter, you can harvest energy from the sun. It provides returns year-round."

There are government grants available to subsidize the cost of making green retrofits to a home or business. More information is available at www.greensunrising.com.

Huch predicted the green technology marketplace will becoming bigger than the automotive industry.

Friday, Green Sun Rising announced the creation of a new company with German-based scen Energy AG, a manufacturer of photovoltaic solar systems which use the sun to generate electricity.

The new company will be headquartered in Windsor.

There are no plans to manufacture the product here now, but the company will offer engineering and program services to customers who choose to buy units to reduce utility costs.

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