

Sustainability makes good business sense

B.C. companies find a wealth of opportunities in expanding green economy

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British Columbia entrepreneurs will enjoy unprecedented opportunities to jump into the green economy as consumers sharpen their focus on high energy prices and conservation, according to companies that have already entered the sector.

Guy Dauncey, one of B.C.'s most sought-after speakers on the topic of sustainable energy, foresees flourishing business for ventures that support global aspirations to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

That includes everything from small importers bringing in electric-powered bicycles, to development of subdivisions, power plants and public utilities.

Dauncey said the sheer volume of opportunities gives him confidence that developed nations will effect a substantial cut to greenhouse gas emissions.

"I do an eight-hour course at Royal Rhodes [University] on climate change solutions that work and people's jaws are dropping. They come away really pumped and excited — you no longer doubt we can do this, when you see how many positive examples are out there."

B.C. companies that made an early leap into the green economy are already finding willing buyers.

Nexterra Energy, a Vancouver-based private company, is marketing proprietary technology enabling the substitution of waste wood for natural gas in boilers and thermal power plants in the forest sector — and elsewhere.

The four-year-old company has a handful of projects in B.C. and has received financial support from the federal government for research and development — and for projects including the successful placement of one of its heating units at Tolko Industries' plywood mill near Kamloops.

Nexterra is also receiving federal support for a "micro" utility that will provide hot water for Victoria's Docks Green project — a 1.3 million square foot mix of residential, office, retail and industrial space along the city's waterfront.

But Nexterra CEO Jonathan Rhone noted in an interview that the company can operate independently of government support — particularly because of

the size and scope of energy savings that its waste wood process enables.

Tolko cut its annual natural gas costs by \$1.5 million — the equivalent greenhouse gas savings to taking 3,000 cars off the road.

Rhone notes that Nexterra has a contract to supply its technology to Johnson Controls, a global facilities management company that is completing a \$16-million US upgrade of water heating systems at University of Southern Carolina.

Rhone says that deal shows the company can stand on its own, and he's anticipating opportunities in the industrial and residential, and institutional sectors — without federal support.

"For many years, many of our industrial sectors relied on stable prices for fuel and electricity. That world is kind of coming apart on us," Rhone said in an interview. "The market leaders are all investing in fuel substitution technologies and equipment, and it's a multi-billion dollar market in North America."

One of B.C.'s most successful companies, Corix, sees equal opportunity in the resource conservation and greenhouse gas reduction sectors.

The 1,000-employee company split off as an independent, employee-owned entity after Kinder Morgan took over Terasen Inc. in 2005, and hasn't looked back.

Corix has designed and built more than 500 water and sewage treatment systems across North America.

Corix business development vice president Eric Van Roon says water treatment systems that focus on conservation will dominate in future.

District 'geoexchange' heating systems that lower energy costs — and greenhouse gas emissions — by tapping into warmth in the Earth will be increasingly popular, he said.

"Governments set targets. If Kyoto is seriously endorsed that would be another driver of reduction of greenhouse gas and so on. It's bound to drive more inno-

vation in terms of energy solution," Van Roon said in an interview. "

"The way water infrastructure has been managed historically, it tends to be by municipalities and not for the long term.

"They are recovering their operating costs and not necessarily charging the full cost of the systems. Water conservation is important not only in terms of managing the watershed, the aquifer and water supply but particularly in keeping infrastructure costs down. If you can conserve water usage and defer expansion of plants and treatment

facilities, you will save money."

Dauncey, executive director of the B.C. Sustainable Energy Association, says companies installing solar hot water systems and solar electricity systems will thrive.

"For solar hot water, the real breakthrough should be for laundries and restaurants, motels and hotels, which are constantly using large volumes of hot water," Dauncey said in an interview.

He said companies that design and build district heating facilities

will increasingly turn to geoexchange systems because they are more environmentally friendly than conventional systems relying on natural gas.

"All the heat exchange companies are going to do well," he said.

"Then there are sectors like wind power. It has great potential in British Columbia."

At the level of the consumer, Dauncey expects heightened concern about greenhouse gas emissions will cause more people to select locally grown organic produce over imported fruits and vegetables.

Companies that install power and gas meters that provide minute-by-minute information on energy consumption will also be in demand, he said.

Dauncey also expects a surge of interest in electric-powered vehicles.



Local organic farmers stand to benefit from consumer concern about greenhouse gases.