

# KAMLOOPS THIS WEEK

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## Weyco tests new technology

by **DARSHAN LINDSAY**

*Staff reporter*

Kamloops is becoming a hotbed of activity for a Vancouver-based company offering forestry firms an alternative to high energy bills.

On Monday, Nexterra Energy Corp. announced an agreement with Weyerhaeuser and the Pulp and Paper Research Institute of Canada (PAPRICAN) to test the viability of its gasification technology in pulp mills, specifically to fuel the lime kilns.

It's the second time the company is partnering on a project in Kamloops. The first was the recent installation of a \$6-million gasification system at Tolko's Heffley Creek plywood plant. The com-

pany also has a test plant in the Campbell Creek industrial park, built in late 2003, which is responsible for product development.

"We're putting down some pretty good roots in Kamloops," company president Jonathan Rhone said Tuesday from his Vancouver office.

He noted, where possible, the company uses local suppliers for product development and portions of the manufacture of its gasification systems.

Nexterra's technology is increasingly attracting attention from the forest industry because of the potential cost savings. Gasification essentially converts wood waste into energy. This energy then takes the place of natural

gas and is used to power up mill operations.

Savings can easily reach into the millions of dollars annually.

In the case of the Kamloops pulp mill, the lime kiln is the biggest user of natural gas at the local operation, said Bill Adams, Weyerhaeuser's manufacturing services manager.

"This could displace half our natural gas [consumption]," said Adams, leading to a potential savings of \$4 million annually.

For Tolko, the investment in a gasification system is expected to cut the plant's fuel bill by 30 per cent, or \$1.5 million annually.

Forestry operations use significant amounts of natural gas, but with soaring energy prices, compa-

nies are searching for alternatives.

"It used to be in North America, we had the cheapest natural gas, but that's completely changed in the last 10 years," said Rhone, adding what used to be a competitive advantage in North America has now become a liability.

This is not the first time Weyerhaeuser has looked at alternate sources of energy for its pulp mill. It's already meeting its electricity needs through a co-generation facility on site.

The agreement with Nexterra, meanwhile, is about investigating the gasification technology further, said Adams, before the company makes a decision on a possible investment.