

Greener ways to operate

South Shore businesses recycle canisters, residual heat

By BEVERLEY WARE South Shore Bureau

BRIDGEWATER — One hundred and fifty thousand half-kilogram propane canisters are sold in Nova Scotia every year. Only 40,000 are ever turned in as hazardous waste, so what happens to the other 110,000 — each containing a thimbleful of liquid gas?

"A lot are in bushes in Nova Scotia and we'd like to see more of them returned so we can properly dispose of them," said David Cameron of RavenStar Resource Recovery.

He has partnered with The Nodding Group of Bridgewater to develop a system to remove every last drop of gas, use that gas to power the generator that runs the system, then puncture the cans so that a landfill operator knows they are safe to handle and can sell them for recycling.

"It's very high-quality steel," Cameron said.

He was Environment Minister Sterling Belliveau's first stop of the day Tuesday on a tour of South Shore businesses using clean technology to save money and help the environment.

Cameron said the canisters are only safe to handle when the gas has been completely removed. "Up until that time, this is a bomb; it's hazardous material officially."

He wants the province to ban propane canisters from landfills, making things safer for the employees, better for the environment and helping to fuel his businesses. Cameron told Belliveau he could hire six people if he handled all 150,000 canisters.

Part way across town at the Bridgewater Memorial Arena, a few hockey players got in some early ice time. Sustainability planner Leon de Vreede said the town recently replaced the old overhead lights with high-efficiency fixtures, saving Bridgewater \$8,000 a year in power bills and eliminating 48 tonnes of greenhouse gas.

Custodian Jane Weare said parents, skaters and visitors love the brighter lighting. The one drawback — she can see the dust on the old pipes now.

De Vreede said the town is also implementing solar thermal energy systems in its town hall, public works garage and police department, saving 12,000 litres of oil and \$10,000 a year. Mayor Carroll Publicover credited the Environment Department with making these upgrades possible by funding half their cost.

In Lunenburg, ABCO Industries manager Graham Gerhardt showed Belliveau how the sludge dewatering truck it developed works. He said it cuts fuel costs by 80 per cent because the truck separates liquids and solids onsite, which means fewer trips between homes and a treatment facility.

Gerhardt said their truck travelled 640 kilometres to service the same number of septic tanks as a traditional pumping truck that travelled 7,200 kilometres.

The bacteria-laden water is put back into the septic tank while the solids are taken away to be composted. The province helped Antigonish buy ABCO's first truck. Chester also has one now.

At Laughing Whale coffee roasters in Lunenburg, co-owner Steve Zubalik explained how his new roaster, the first of its kind in Canada, burns 90 per cent of the smoke it generates, and then puts that heat back into the machine. He also gives the coffee grounds and husks from the beans to farmers for compost.

"We produce the lowest carbon footprint per cup of coffee in eastern Canada."

Clearwater explained how it is piloting technology to capture waste heat from a ship's exhaust to run refrigeration systems that freeze fish at sea. Spokesman Jim Mosher said Clearwater burns 30 million litres of fuel a year, harvesting 31.8 million kilograms of seafood. Thirty per cent of that fuel is for on-board refrigeration.

Ottawa-based Thermal Frost developed the technology. President Steve Donaldson said it will "virtually eliminate" Clearwater's fuel consumption for refrigeration.

Belliveau said in an interview the projects all benefit the environment and the economy, but he

is concerned the federal government won't renew the \$42.5-million ecoNova Scotia Fund that supported these ideas. "That money is gone," and despite his request for it to be extended, "I haven't seen a response."

(bware@herald.ca)

CLOSE WINDOW
© 2008 The Halifax Herald Limited