

# Dockside Green's heating project draws applause

## Proponents hail plant as wave of the future

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Building a heating plant in a residential neighbourhood near downtown doesn't typically get applause.

But a group of suits and green enthusiasts loudly put their hands together yesterday for the official announcement of a utility service being built smack along Victoria's Upper Harbour on Tyee Road.

The Nexterra Energy Corp. facility will be the opposite of a pollution-belching, climate-warming utility operation despite its use of waste wood and tree trimmings for fuel. Instead, the biomass gasification system will convert the wood into a synthetic gas using a process that proponents say will result in the first time that a residential community will be heated in a greenhouse gas-neutral way.

Joe Van Belleghem, Dockside Green co-developer and apostle for the sustainable-community movement, said the biomass project takes a huge stance on climate change. It will result in the Dockside development going beyond heat self-sufficiency to exporting heat to other projects.

"Climate change will be won or lost in Asia, but Canada can be a showcase for sustainable communities," Van Belleghem said.

The two-megawatt system that will heat residences for about 2,500 people living in the Dockside Green development will cost between \$6 million and \$8 million. The federal government has contributed \$2.29 million toward development of the technology.

The Dockside project is on the smaller end of the scale for Vancouver's four-year-old Nexterra, which is using the technology in a big way at the University of South Carolina and at the Tolko Industries Ltd. plywood mill near Kamloops.

The American university is hoping to sell 1.38 megawatts of electricity to the grid after heating its campus using the technology.

The mill, meanwhile, expects to save more than \$1.5 million in annual fuel costs and reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 12,000 tonnes per year.

The residential application represents an "up-and-coming market," said

Jonathan Rhone, president of Nexterra.

Rhone estimates that market is worth hundreds of millions of dollars and his company is on the leading edge globally to take advantage of it.

Rhone started his career in the oil and gas sector with Amico and later used his academic training in environmental science at the United Nations. He was part of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro when climate change came onto the global agenda.

He recognized the emerging clean energy market when it was clear there would be no end to rising natural-gas costs.

All of a sudden, industry and communities wanted to take control of their own energy production, said Rhone, whose company develops and manufactures ready-to-operate gasification systems. "The U.S. reliance on foreign energy sources is driving interest in our technology."

Initially the new technology was a hard sell, but Nexterra stayed focused on developing the clean-energy systems. Lifting a quote from Will Rogers, Rhone said: "Why not go out on a limb? That's where all the fruit is."

Today, he said, Nexterra is one of the fastest growing clean-energy companies and is a global leader in the technology.

When complete, the Dockside Green gasification plant will be run by Corix, a B.C.-based utility provider that will also manage Dockside's internal wastewater system.

The Dockside announcement was supported by B.C. Hydro and Terasen Energy Services.

Doug Stout, Terasen vice-president of marketing and business development, said people might ask why Terasen, a gas company, would be there.

He pointed out that Terasen is in the energy-distribution business, and with the growing interest of the federal government and others in energy alternatives, "We realize there is a myriad of new opportunities for moving forward."

Bruce Sampson, Hydro's vice-president of sustainability, said without the gasification plant Hydro would have had to build a new plant to power Dockside Green.

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