INNOVATION PLACE®

Innovation Place Newsletter
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Innovation Place joins Energy Innovators!

Saskatoon's research park is now approved to become an Energy Innovator! Innovation Place has joined the Energy Innovators Initiative (EII), developed by Natural Resources Canada's Office of Energy Efficiency. The initiative is designed to encourage commercial businesses and public institutions to make investments in energy efficiency, with the objectives of reducing energy costs, improving competitiveness and reducing greenhouse emissions that contribute to climate change.

The EII offers members access to tools and financial incentives of $25,000 or 50 per cent of the cost of the study and development of an energy management plan.

"We're going to conduct an energy audit of all of our buildings, to identify financially attractive energy management initiatives," says Murray Guy, project manager at Innovation Place.

Potential ways to reduce energy use, operating and maintenance costs, as well as improving indoor air quality, could include retrofitting lighting systems, converting ventilation systems to variable flows of air, replacing motors with energy-efficient models or improving the control of existing systems, says Guy.

Newly-constructed buildings at both the Saskatoon and Regina research parks have been built to very high standards, under the parks' Advanced Building Design Program. "This is the first opportunity that we've had to go through some of our older existing buildings in detail to see where the energy-saving opportunities are," says Guy. All Innovation Place-managed buildings will be considered for retrofits.

As a result of joining the initiative, Innovation Place has been entered in the Voluntary Climate Change Registry. "Our participation in the Energy Innovators Program could earn Innovation Place a bronze, silver or gold star rating," says Guy. "It's too early to tell how well we're going to do."

Guy says the park has carefully tracked its energy use for quite a while. "We can tell you how much energy every building uses in megajoules (MJ) per square metre. We've already got a good start on the program."

The audit will help Innovation Place achieve its commitment to reduce energy use in the park. "In 2001, all of the buildings combined used an average of 2,241 megajoules per square metre. In a year from now, we hope to be down to 2,050 megajoules per square metre," says Guy.

Upon completion of the audit and the identification of the most feasible and effective energy retrofits, money will be allocated through the budgeting process to implement the projects, says Guy. Here again, Innovation Place will benefit from incentives through the Energy Innovators Program. EII provides capital cost incentives of 25 per cent of the capital cost of a project, up to $250,000, provided that the retrofit measure is duplicated in other facilities.

Environmental responsibility has long been a mandate of the research park, says Guy. "The Energy Innovators audit will make us more focused, and hopefully earn the park some recognition for its green initiatives."

The building audits will be conducted over the next few months. Guy hopes the energy management plan will be developed by November, with retrofit projects completed over the next year.

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Innovation Place management would appreciate your help in this initiative by helping to conserve energy. Turning off lights, equipment and closing fumehood doors when not in use will go a long way to help lower operating costs and protecting the environment. If , with your help, the park is successful in exceeding the 2050 MJ goal, a celebration party will be held!

Loose Foot Computing attributes growth to move to Regina Research Park

Information technology firm Loose Foot Computing has grown over 150 per cent in the last 12 months! Co-owner Andrew MacCorquodale says plenty of the credit for this tremendous growth can be traced back to their decision to relocate the business to the Regina Research Park in December of 2000.

Loose Foot Computing offers website hosting to small and medium-sized businesses. It provides complete business solutions to companies wanting to develop or expand their presence and commercial potential globally on the Internet. Loose Foot Computing, which is owned by MacCorquodale and Robert Sauchyn, currently serves clients in over 60 countries.

"Moving to the Regina Research Park situated us in the middle of Saskatchewan's premier information technology-capable center," says MacCorquodale. "We would have been forced to move to a province where our growth could be supported if it weren't for the infrastructure and initiative provided by the research park."

MacCorquodale says it wasn't a difficult decision to move from their previous location at the Wascana Energy Building in Regina. The move made sense since they were seeking expansion possibilities at the same time that The Terrace was being built. Moving to Regina's research park placed them in a facility with companies featuring complementary services.

"The Regina Research Park consists primarily of private sector IT companies, with a few government companies who are in the same industry," says MacCorquodale.

"All of the tenants help each other out indirectly."

MacCorquodale adds that they wanted to situate themselves where information technology growth was the key focus. He credits the management at the research park for understanding the need to grow the IT sector in the province and being willing to act on the advice or suggestions of the tenants.

MacCorquodale and Sauchyn are the Regina Research Park's youngest tenants. At only 19 years of age, the two entrepreneurs have a bright future ahead of them in an industry that is growing by leaps and bounds.

Both owners learned their computer skills on their own through trial and error and exposure to computer programming and operating systems at a very young age. By the time each of them were 12, they had their own home-based computer companies.

Sauchyn formed Loose Foot Computing and marketed it on the Internet through free banner advertisements, registered it on search engines and purchased some classified ads. His first client was an American-based firm that was pleased with the results of his work. That led to larger clients such as an Israeli company, which hired him to develop statistical software so it could determine the types of visitors to its website.

While Sauchyn was developing his company, MacCorquodale was busy with his own company - Rapid World Computer Solutions - which manufactured computer systems for international resale. The two computer wizards met in 1999 when they were both teachers at an ISM Computer Camp. That's when they realized they were competing with one another and decided to merge the two companies into one.

Sauchyn and MacCorquodale graduated from Regina high schools last year. Both of them indicate that they would love to go to university someday but because their business is growing at such a rapid pace it doesn't look like they'll be able to do this anytime soon.

They are planning to expand into Calgary in the near future. A company of equal size would employ over 40, however their focus on automation and efficiency has allowed them to better focus their revenue. They currently employ five staff and have a developmental team of four others who work off-location for their larger projects.
MacCorquodale attributes the success of Loose Foot to good business sense and timing. They were the first web host in Canada to support the wireless application protocol and they provide high quality, all-inclusive hosting at a cost below that of most standard hosting plans. He also proudly notes that his company is quickly setting the industry standard in reliability, customer service, network response times, and in making the newest technologies accessible to businesses of any size.
A unique feature that Loose Foot offers their clients is a live internet-based chat centre staffed by a technical support representative. Clients are able to relay their problems to them and cut and paste the error they are receiving in order to get immediate technical help. Regardless of what your problem or question may be, you can always count on an immediate response from a real person in their chat centre.

Global engineering powerhouse opens offices at Innovation Place

One of the world's largest engineering firms, AMEC Inc., now has a corporate presence at Innovation Place in Saskatoon.
AMEC E&C (Engineering & Construction) Services Limited is one of 250 worldwide AMEC plc offices. Headquartered in the United Kingdom, the engineering giant employs a combined workforce of 50,000 employees. In November of 2001, the global engineering firm relocated its offices from the Sutherland industrial area to Innovation Place, occupying 15,800 square feet of office space in the newly-dedicated Dr. Jack McFaull Building, located at 421 Downey Road.
AMEC's Saskatoon office specializes in engineering, construction, environmental and technology solutions for the mining, mineral processing, chemical production, forestry, power, oil/gas and food processing industries. The Saskatoon staff of 65 offers multi-disciplinary engineering capabilities in consultancy, design, delivery and commissioning through to maintenance and operation.
The engineering construction division works with many of Canada's largest resource companies, including Agrium, International Minerals Corp., Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, Asia Pacific Resources, Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, Cameco Corporation, Cogema Resources, TransGas, SaskPower and Weyerhaeuser.
Potash mining is a particular specialty of the engineering firm, which has served the Saskatchewan market through its predecessor companies (Cominco Engineering, H.A. Simons Ltd., Cambrian Engineering, AGRA/Simons) for more than 30 years. AMEC is one of the very few companies worldwide which can offer integrated services specific to potash, from mining to material handling, ore processing to product delivery.
In just the last decade, AMEC has undertaken more than 25 studies and projects at potash mines and mills around the globe. Included in the range of consulting services offered by AMEC E&C are deposit assessments, supervised process testwork, feasibility studies and preparation of efficient and cost-effective mine and plant designs.
Three corporate guide words best describe AMEC - Knowledge, Innovation and Technology - says AMEC E&C manager of operations Mike Ferguson. "Our business is a technology business, bringing state-of-the-art technological solutions to our clients through knowledge and innovation," says Ferguson.

AMEC E&C marketing co-ordinator Natalie Johnson says, "We do a lot of feasibility studies on new mine development. We also provide solutions for modifications and improvements to existing mines and structures.

"Because we are a multi-disciplinary engineering firm, we bring significant expertise to all aspects of mining - including structural, mechanical and electrical engineering. The disciplines all work together within the different functions of a mine."

The specialized expertise of AMEC E&C engineers is in demand around the globe. "Our manager Will Brandsema promotes this office internationally as a potash and uranium knowledge centre. Obviously, the Saskatchewan market drives what we do here, but potash is mined around the world. Mr. Brandsema is currently conducting a phosphate mining feasibility study in Australia," says Johnson. Other engineers in the AMEC office have recently consulted on projects in Jordan, Thailand and Argentina.

"The expertise of our staff is recognized around the world. Companies from around the world frequently request specific individuals on our staff for their particular knowledge and expertise. They are truly world-renowned."

Among AMEC E&C's current Saskatchewan projects is consultation involving Cogema Resources' JEB mill at McClean Lake.

"Clients want the best knowledge that they can draw. They are also looking for the most cost-effective ways to solve a problem or improve production. Project management is another strength of AMEC E&C. We have significant expertise in managing large industrial projects. This, coupled with the latest in project management software, helps us manage every aspect of a project, from small to large," says Johnson.

Being part of an international engineering firm also means that AMEC's Saskatoon office can source experts from within the corporation's global network of 50,000 employees. "We can draw on global resources, either through our international marketing department, or through our intranet search function. The search engine will produce a lengthy list of AMEC experts in a specific area of specialty. There are times when we need to pull in a specialist from the U.K., for example, or where they've needed to use some of our people. It's a great business resource," says Johnson.

What advantages does Innovation Place bring to one of the world's largest engineering firms?

"Innovation Place has an atmosphere of invention and inventiveness, which we believe matches our own approach," says Ferguson. "We hope to take advantage of the synergy of outlook and approach to help grow our business."

By locating at Innovation Place, AMEC E&C now enjoys proximity to several of its clients who are also located in the park. "By being here, we hope to be closer to them in their day-to-day work. We also hope to gain additional clients from our interaction with tenants of the research park," says Ferguson.

Alviva takes aim at neurodegenerative diseases

Stroke. Alzheimer's. Parkinson's. Lou Gehrig's disease. As our population ages, these neurodegenerative diseases will take a greater human and economic toll unless more effective treatments are found. That is the mission of Alviva Biopharmaceuticals Inc.

The company, headquartered at Innovation Place, is looking at promising new drugs capable of decelerating the progress of neurodegenerative disorders. Called aliphatio propargylamines, these drugs work by slowing down - perhaps even halting - the death of cells and the resulting physical deterioration which characterize neurodegenerative diseases. Incorporated in 1998, Alviva now has patents on a library of more than 260 compounds, one-third of which have already undergone preliminary testing. According to Alviva president and

CEO, Dr. Alan Boulton, support from the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP) of the National Research Council (NRC) has been "not just significant but essential" to the company's progress.

"As a consequence of becoming known to IRAP, we've established a very successful collaboration with the NRC's Institute for Biological Sciences (IBS) in Ottawa," explains Dr. Boulton. "We found there are considerable overlaps in the interests of IBS and the interests of Alviva. It really is turning out to be a win-win situation for all involved."

Under a two-year program established with IBS, Alviva has sent a staff member to Ottawa to work alongside and learn from the institute researchers. The program will also see Alviva and IBS share information and expertise. As tests continue and the company moves closer to the goal of gaining approval of some of its drugs for treatment, Alviva also plans to take advantage of IRAP's Precommercialization Assistance Program which helps organizations take new technologies from the lab to the marketplace.

In addition to helping people with neurological disorders live longer better quality lives, the emerging treatments will also mean health care savings in the millions for nations around the globe. Looking towards the future, Dr. Boulton is enthusiastic about both the implications of drugs developed by Alviva and the prospect of working with IRAP to bring about exciting new innovations in the field of biopharmaceuticals. "We're making demonstrable progress in that we now have drugs that have shown activity in slowing the progression of neurodegenerative disorders. Once they've gone through the regulatory process and phase two trials, I think we will have succeeded in changing treatment."

For more information on IRAP-Prairies, call (306) 975-4748 in Saskatoon, or (306) 780-7493 in Regina. E-mail: irap.prairies@nrc.ca .

24 Hour Relay participants go the distance!

Chalk up another big success for the 24 Hour Relay for Easter Seal Kids. The 16th annual fund-raiser, hosted by Innovation Place on June 8 and 9, has raised $89,051.17 to date, says event organizer Carrie Olson of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council. "The total is still growing. I know of more money that's still coming in."

The funds raised will go to support three important programs of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, including the operation of Camp Easter Seal at Manitou Beach, Adaptive Technologies and Summer Fund. All three Easter Seal programs help children with disabilities gain independence, self-confidence and enjoy recreational opportunities.

A total of 29 teams of 20 people participated in the round-the-clock relay, an increase of two teams over the 2001 event. In total, all relay participants ran a combined 3,432 kms during the 24-hour period. The Awl Shoppe Souls showed they really knew how to go the distance, with their team members recording a total of 292.6 kms.

This year's top fund-raising team was Century 21, raising $19,509. The top individual fund-raiser was Jacqueline Beattie, also from the Century 21 team. Jacqueline raised over $4,000.

The team spirit award for 2002 went to Dawn Food Products. "They participated in everything, and showed the best relay spirit," says Olson.

Events like volleyball, tug-o-war, humanopoly and the second annual tug-o-water competition added to the fun of the 24 Hour Relay. In addition to being the long distance team, The Awl Shoppe Souls also won the tug-o-water event.

A new special event was introduced at this year's relay – CD golf. Participants were challenged to toss CDs, frisbee-style, into 4-litre pails. "That was one of the new events that people really liked this year," says Olson.

The 2002 relay even attracted some special guests, adds Olson. A number of Saskatoon's "Pigs in the City" sculptures were transported to the grounds of Innovation Place to enhance the festivities. The Pigs in the City community art initiative - with its 18 unique porcine characters - made its debut in downtown Saskatoon this spring. Like the 24 Hour Relay, Pigs in the City will also help raise funds for the Saskatchewan Abilities Council.