



It's not easy being Green

...or is it?

Sault Ste. Marie seems to have found the way

Story by Nadine Robinson

Photos courtesy of Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation

People around the world are taking note of Sault Ste. Marie in Northern Ontario: not only for the excellent fishing, skiing, hiking, or biking, but for the Sault's leadership position in renewable energy. Now known as the Alternative Energy Capital of North America, the city is attracting attention from businesses, communities and media from across the country and around the globe.

Earlier this year, a delegation from Alberta was in Sault Ste. Marie to learn how the city has surpassed Kermit the Frog and found an easy way to be "green." Last year, an international press tour learned and wrote about the city's developments in the local green sector. Both visiting groups were interested in the Sault's accomplishments in wind energy, solar energy, waste-to-energy and more.

They visited the Prince Wind Farm (*pictured above*), which is the third largest wind farm in Canada, with 126 turbines generating 189 megawatts. Then they moved on to Starwood Energy Group, which will be one of the largest solar energy farms in North America soon, with over 50 megawatts in the works, able to power 21,000 homes. Spin-off benefits were already apparent to the delegations as Sault Ste. Marie is now the home



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of Heliene Canada's photovoltaic solar panel manufacturing facility. Elementa Group was another destination, where work continues on generating electricity through the conversion of municipal garbage into clean energy using a patented "Steam Reformation" process.

They also heard about Ellsin Environmental's tire recycling, SITTM Technologies' biodiesel production, and five hydroelectric stations in the area that produce 203 megawatts of renewable energy.

"Alternative energy is the wave of the future, as citizens are becoming more conscientious of the environment," said John Febraro, Director of Industrial Marketing for the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation. "We will continue to attract value-added opportunities in this sector for the benefit of Sault Ste. Marie, Northern Ontario and the entire world."

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Top left: Ernie Dueck (facing camera), Elementa Group's Vice-President of Engineering, gives a plant tour to a group of overseas investors.

Top right: The official opening of Sault Ste. Marie's new state-of-the-art hospital on February 15. (l-r) Ron Gagnon, Sault Area Hospital President & CEO; Dr. David Walde and Mayor Debbie Amarosa. Photo courtesy of John O'Donnell.

Cogeneration was next on the list, learning about Essar Steel Algoma, where excess gas from the steelmaking process produces 70 megawatts of electricity, reducing the company's reliance on the power grid significantly. Unfortunately, the journalists missed out on hearing about the recently signed agreement between St. Marys Paper and the Ontario Power Authority to establish a 30-megawatt cogeneration project, which will use biomass (wood waste) to generate electricity.


"Our city slogan is 'Naturally Gifted' and we have a responsibility to the keep the area that way," commented Mayor Debbie Amaroso, the Sault's newly elected first woman mayor, "as a community including a number of first nations' peoples, we believe in the proverb that the land was not given to us by our parents, it was loaned to us by our children. We are validated on our path by these delegations. It is very rewarding."

The health and educational sectors also see the wisdom of the city's green vision.

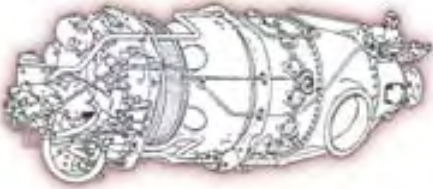
The Sault Area Hospital opened the doors on its state-of-the-art hospital, on budget and ahead of schedule, on March 6, 2011; extolling the new radiation therapy suite, a substantially larger emergency department, major investments in modern equipment, its purpose-built flow, and the planned use of natural light among other energy saving features.

In June, Algoma Public Health will be amalgamating its operations into a \$24-million LEED building, on the campus of Sault College, for operating efficiencies, better client-centred care, and a linkage to the College's School of Health.

Several other amalgamations are planned in the educational sector, allowing for more modern, energy efficient buildings. A new East-end Elementary School for the Huron Superior Board will amalgamate four schools into one \$10 million



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eco-friendly structure with an anticipated September 2012 opening.

The \$46.7 million high school construction of Superior Heights (CVS) is being designed to “Green School” Best Practices, and the \$15.5-million F.H. Clergue French Immersion Public School will boast a number of energy and water efficient measures. Also slated to open in the Fall of 2011, Notre-Dame-du-Sault will amalgamate its three catholic francophone schools into one in a \$7.5-million location.

The Notre-Dame-des-Écoles school proudly became one of the first schools in Canada to produce its own solar energy through panels on its roof, and integrate renewable energy into their curriculum. Similarly, Sault College houses a Wind turbine of its own and has a whole school dedicated to Green Collar jobs to prepare graduates. Their latest announcement had Mike Holmes in the Sault, endorsing the College’s unique two-year Home Inspection Technician program starting in September 2011. The College’s new \$25-million eco-friendly building is also running on-time and on-budget to house the College’s flagship Aviation program among others.

Algoma University will also imminently open their \$21.4 Million Bioscience Technology and Convergence Centre, a LEED Certified facility. “The centre

will nurture student learning and research opportunities,” said the University’s new President Dr. Richard Myers, “catalyzing the growth of a knowledge-based economy in Sault Ste. Marie.” The building will house the new four-year honours biology program, as well as The Health Informatics Research Institute, The Invasive Species Research Institute, Algoma Games for Health, and the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (with their business incubator and award-winning Community Geomatics Centre).

“A wide range of historic investments in the Sault’s renewable energy sector exemplify the impact of the province’s Green Energy Act” said David Oraziotti, MPP for Sault Ste. Marie. “Together we are protecting the environment, creating over a thousand good quality construction jobs, permanent local jobs and positioning our community as a North American leader in this growing industry. The additional recent investments in health, education, and innovation further improve the quality of life in Sault Ste. Marie for current and prospective residents.”

“The Innovation Centre and Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation are nurturing entrepreneurs and bringing new business to the city, and the province is certainly bolstering community efforts towards a diversified, prosperous community.” Mayor Amaroso said. “We will keep the lines of communication open between the business community and the City as we continue to build our community economically, recreationally, culturally and environmentally.” She proudly concluded: “A quick look around Sault Ste. Marie, beyond the obvious green transformation, shows a city poised for growth.”

Perhaps Bob and Doug Mackenzie should start telling people to “take off to the Great Green North, eh.”



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