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TIRED OF HIGH FUEL PRICES?

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Turning waste into wealth Digester alters rotting food into power

BY SHARON HILL, THE WINDSOR STAR MAY 23, 2009

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Roger Tiessen, president of Seaciff Energy, Chatham-Kent-Essex MP Dave Van Kesteren and Dennis Dick, a Seaciff Energy partner and co-owner of Pelee Hydroponics, a vegetable greenhouse, hold greenhouse tomato plants that will form part of the fuel for a new anaerobic digester in Leamington. The digester will turn waste into electricity and received a \$1.6 million federal loan Friday, May 22, 2009 to help with construction.

Photograph by: Sharon Hill, The Windsor Star

LEAMINGTON - A \$6.5-million facility that will turn plant waste from greenhouses and food processors into electricity will be the only one like it in North America.

"It will help turn producers' waste into wealth," Chatham-Kent-Essex MP Dave Van Kesteren said Friday as he announced a \$1.6-million federal loan for the facility on County Road 20 east in Leamington.

The Seaciff Energy Inc. anaerobic digester at Pelee Hydroponics is like a big stomach. It will be fed waste greenhouse vines and plant waste from food processors that usually head to the dump.

A small amount of manure will also be added. The waste will ferment and produce methane gas which will be burned to produce electricity. That electricity will then be sold to the Ontario power grid.

"Whatever you can feed a cow, you can feed a digester," explained Dennis Dick, a partner in Seaciff Energy Inc. and co-owner with his wife of the nearby Pelee Hydroponics vegetable greenhouse.

Dick said the system enclosed in silos will be the largest digester in Ontario. Because this digester will be able to take the more acidic tomato plant waste, it will be the only one of its kind in North America, he said. Other digesters, such as one located at a dairy farm near London, rely mostly on manure for energy.

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Seaciff Energy Inc. will take waste from Bonduelle, the food processor in Tecumseh that bought the former Green Giant plant. The digester can also take crops grown as fuel such as corn.

The digester will produce enough electricity to power the equivalent of more than 1,800 homes a year, he said.

Construction has already started and is expected to create 10 jobs during construction and four jobs when it is complete for the start of 2010. The digester is expected to generate \$2 million a year in revenue when it starts.




Hot water coming from the digester's engine will be sold to Pelee Hydroponics to pipe through the greenhouse as thermal power. Dick said he was looking for cheaper fuel costs for the greenhouse.

The solids and liquid left at the end of the process could be sold as organic fertilizer. The liquid could be tested to see if it could be used as fertilizer for greenhouse plants.

The digester is totally enclosed and smells like dirt from outside the facility, Dick said.

According to 2006 statistics the Essex County area had 156 greenhouse operations and more than 1,200 acres of greenhouses growing vegetables.

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