

Opinion: B.C. poised to be major clean technologies exporter

BY MARC ANDREW, SPECIAL TO THE SUN JUNE 28, 2011

British Columbia is home to a vibrant cluster of clean-tech companies, but more needs to be done to capture the major global opportunities that are offered in this area. B.C. cities should become showcases for clean technologies that can be exported to fast-growing urban markets in China, India and Brazil.

Companies in the sector should develop innovative partnerships with government and leading multinationals to expand their global reach. Finally, B.C. should combine the strength of its natural resource and clean technology industries through an aggressive marketing campaign in key strategic markets around the world.

These are some of the outcomes from last week's Vancouver Energy Roundtable, which gathered 150 representatives from industry and government to develop a strategy on how to develop the clean-tech sector in the province.

The case for clean technology is simple: The planet cannot support a global economy in which everyone uses energy the same way, and in the same volume, as it is used in North America. The average Chinese or Indian citizen currently consumes a fraction of the energy of a Canadian, which is sure to change as those countries approach our standard of living.

Rapid economic development in Asia and Latin America is increasing commodity prices and creating opportunities for companies that sell energy efficient technologies. That business case will only be strengthened as carbon reduction policies continue to be implemented in jurisdictions around the world.

In British Columbia we're fortunate to be home to a vibrant clean-tech sector. As detailed in The Vancouver Sun last week, clean-tech companies are an emerging driver of the B.C. economy. The sector is host to over 200 companies that are developing technologies that range from software management to biomass gasification. It's important to note that clean-tech companies are not energy producers. Instead, they are developers of technologies that make energy use more efficient.

KPMG estimates that clean-tech firms will generate \$2.5 billion in revenue in 2011, a 57-per-cent increase over 2008. Employment in the sector increased 16.5 per cent over the past year. The global story is similar. From 2004 to 2010, world investment in clean-tech grew from \$52 billion to \$243 billion.

The rising importance of cities is a major global trend and an opportunity for B.C. A population the size of Canada is moving into China's cities every 18 months and 250 million Indians will move from the country to the city over the next two decades. Mayors and planning authorities from those cities will be looking for ideas on how to develop their infrastructure and management systems.

Through smart urban planning and innovative partnerships with local clean-tech companies, B.C.'s cities can become international models

of how to plan and implement energy efficient communities.

Representatives from both the public and the private sectors should be building relationships now with the world's fastest growing cities to ensure that our companies have a leg up when competing for those valuable contracts.

Through the introduction of policies that encourage clean-tech adoption within British Columbia, our clean-tech companies can find the exposure they need to sell products in the world's fastest growing markets. The University of B.C. has introduced the concept of a living laboratory to test best practices and technologies. That's an idea that should be expanded throughout the province.

British Columbia can become a place where leading global companies test their ideas and early-stage technologies. Local clean-tech companies have already begun to establish innovative partnerships with multinational firms, gaining expertise and facilitating access to global markets. Well-structured partnerships with multinational companies are a smart way to help develop local companies into becoming global players themselves.

B.C.'s clean-tech industry is primed to become an important export sector. Our province is already known as a leading international exporter of natural resources. That reputation should be leveraged into a brand that makes room for smarter resource management. Governments should build a coordinated marketing campaign that establishes B.C. as a source of both resources and clean technologies in strategic international markets. We have to make sure that the leaders of rapidly growing economies are aware of the province's companies and technologies when they are making

investment and spending decisions. Otherwise, we risk losing a major opportunity to develop export markets abroad and create jobs at home.

British Columbia's prosperity is linked to the economic rise of Asia. To prosper, Asian economies will require the commodities to fuel growth and the clean technologies to use those resources more efficiently. Our provincial economy was built by creating export markets for natural resources. Our economic future should include the same effort for clean technologies.

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