
First we take Ottawa, then the world

By Julie Fortier, Ottawa Business Journal Staff
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Plasco already has plans to expand

It's the make or break point for Plasco Energy Group.

This week, the plasma gasification technology company starts running its demonstration operation at the Trail Road waste facility for 24-hour periods so data can be collected for the approval of commercial-sized plants, not just in Ottawa, but across Canada. It's a milestone that president and CEO Rod Bryden expects "in weeks, not months."

Mr. Bryden will be updating the business community on his company's progress this week at the Mayor's Breakfast, a joint effort between the Ottawa Business Journal and the office of Mayor Larry O'Brien.

The *OBJ* spoke to Mr. Bryden last week about how the plant is doing.



Plasco Energy Group president and CEO Rod Bryden.
(Darren Brown, OBJ)

OBJ: What will you be speaking about at the Mayor's Breakfast?

BRYDEN: I will give a summary update as to where the trail road plant stands. That has been sent around to (city) council and the advisory committee we have. Mainly however, I will take people through what it is Plasco does that is so different, and what the significance is both in Ottawa and the world, and what happens with waste that is not recyclable.

OBJ: What's the capacity right now?

BRYDEN: This is a single string of a commercial plant, so a commercial plant will be built by multiples of what you see at Trail Road. A single plant is 100 tonnes of capacity, but our approval is to operate it at 80 tonnes per day. This is a demonstration plant, and we have received relatively quick approval under a special regulation.

We have run the plant in the commissioning mode. We have run it about 80 to 100 hours. It typically runs two to three days a week for eight to 12 hours at a time. Beginning (this) week it will start running regular shifts, and through the month of October we expect it to begin running 24 hours per day, but not every single day of the week.

OBJ: When will we know if this will be taken to the next level and made commercial?

BRYDEN: There is no deadline in a sense that we have asked for two years of operation, which is what has been agreed. The two years begins on the first day that we receive municipal waste. But it will not take two years (for) the Ministry of Environment to conclude that they should approve more of these. What we asked for was two years, so in the event that we found the initial operation wasn't exactly what we wanted, we would have lots of time to get it right. I will expect that we will finalize contracts for a commercial plant before the end of this year.

In fact, we already have signed memorandums of understanding for plants elsewhere, but in each case they are subject to having data from the Ottawa plant.

OBJ: So you have plans in other cities already?

BRYDEN: Oh yes, and not only in Ontario.

Now we are looking to see if the plant performs to technical specifications, which we are confident it will. It's easily established by engineers who look at it that there is no part of the process that will change over time. We still have not established that we will be able to run the plant 24 hours a day, seven days a week with the efficiency we expect. But those are not environmental problems, those are net-value-to-us problems. From the community's point of view, they are interested in getting rid of their waste at a good price and ensuring that the environmental results are what they expect. That does not take long to establish.

OBJ: Could these plants be brought in closer to the city centre to stop trucking the garbage out of the city?

BRYDEN: We put the plant at Trail Road because we wanted to have it where the waste was already going, to not change the trucking patterns. It was done for ease of approval. But it is quiet, there are no emissions and because we make them efficient at a small size, there is very limited truck traffic. There would be less than what you have going into a small suburban supermarket.

So absolutely, a big part of the underlying design of this system is to make it efficient at a modest size so it can be placed within the community where people are comfortable with it.

OBJ: What has the interest from investors been like?

BRYDEN: Outstanding. We have raised in the last 18 months \$40 million of equity. That plant was entirely built with equity plus contributions from the SDTC (Sustainable Development Technology Canada) of about \$9.2 million.

The plant is completed and we have plenty of equity remaining to run our plant for months. But we will expand this company around the world and incrementally bring in additional equity as the growth requires it. We don't need any defensive funds, we don't need any more funds to prove the concept.

OBJ: How big do you plan to go?

BRYDEN: We expect to be the method of choice for the world in process of waste. In the next year or two, we expect to have projects in the United States and several provinces in Canada. We have a memorandum of understanding in Wales ... for a 400-tonne-a-day plant. We have an agreement signed in Barcelona for a 200-tonne-a-day plant. There is interest in a wide variety of areas and we intend to be a very large business.

The breakfast will be held in Jean Pigott Hall at Ottawa City Hall downtown on Oct. 11 and includes networking and a buffet breakfast from 7:30-8 a.m. Few tickets remain for the event. A corporate table of eight is \$200. Single tickets are \$30. For information, phone Sue Perry at (613) 744-4800 ext. 225 or email:

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