

Great green initiatives are happening right here

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it is something that many believe is a future, ideal goal that is still in the process of future development.

It's also something that one usually associates with being based out of big cities, which attract the best minds and the most money. Could it ever be possible that little ol' Brant County would be on that forefront? Doing so not in the future, but in the present, and using the motto of "buy locally" for its supplies? Well that is just what I have learned is happening in St. George with ProTerra LED.

The local person behind the simple idea of removing fluorescent/mercury lights and replacing them within the same structure with 'instant-on' LED lights in offices, streets, factories and businesses, is John Johnston. He clearly knows what he is doing.

He has, after all, worked with the Department of National Defence, and if my government and military trust his skills, I'm proud to say he's a local with a simple, obvious, yet ingenious idea which has made him one of the leaders of revolutionizing energy usage across the globe. John is committed to using local suppliers for his needed materials, and is confident that his prototypes will soon be making their way across North America and will result in more local jobs. And that is all good news for us in Brant, but also the Canadian economy, and, more importantly, our health and that of the planet.

It's true that LED lights can use up to 80% less energy than their fluorescent ancestors, but did you know they can also make you feel better if you are suffering from a case of depression? That's because they more accurately replicate real daylight.

They have also shown promise in reducing the pain associated with chemotherapy and radiation. So not only are LED lights an economically better investment for your home or office, and not only are they the smart environmental choice, but they may soon be doctor-recommended along with your daily dose of apple. Commander Spock would say that going green in this way is the logical choice. However, using LED is far from the only way you can lead a green lifestyle and it is my hope that we see many more green energy projects in the months and years ahead.

Therefore, as someone who believes the future is in green technology, I am pleased to see the Ontario government hopping aboard that train with the newly introduced Green Energy Act. The new legislation, if passed, aims to make Ontario a world leader in renewable energy by making it easy to establish, and access, technologies such as solar, wind and Energy Star appliances, at competitive and attractive prices for both the consumers and businesses.

With the proposed legislation not yet passed, green companies are already flocking to Ontario to set up shop, with one Ontario green company, Everbrite Solar, expanding and expecting to add approximately 1,200 jobs in response to the act's announcement. It is estimated that within three years, at least 50,000 jobs will be created across Ontario as a result of this act's passage. Your office building will be making renovations to meet new greener Ontario building standards, and green businesses will be encouraged to purchase domestic supplies, exactly what Johnston at ProTerra is already doing.

Of note to Brant County, in an effort to reach out to First Nations communities, they will be able to own and operate green initiatives on their land, and will be able to take advantage of the 'one-stop' application process just as other companies. Hopefully, this will foster further co-operation between our two communities. It appears that many new economic opportunities exist for local, diverse communities like ours to start up and expand their own renewable

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energy projects, thus generating, and saving us money. No doubt, there will be some adjustment period and changes, but with some patience and realizing the benefits and potential of renewable energy, we can get

through them and make them work for us, and our future generations.

However, proactive steps from government are just one part of the equation; it's also a call to us all to be part of a culture of conservation ourselves. To be honest, I'm somewhat guilty of neglect in this area myself, but I don't think it's entirely my fault due to what I feel is a lack of local promotion. For instance, I would have never known of the great work done by ProTerra were it not for the fact that I heard that Minister of Energy and Infrastructure George Smitherman was paying a visit there as part of his Green Energy Tour to promote the new legislation. The experience made me realize that it shouldn't take a politician or a political tour, to make us aware of our own potential in the green economy, or any field, and especially in regards to what secrets lie within our community.

I'm seriously beginning to rethink the value of the phrase, "The grass is greener on the other side." Learning about projects like ProTerra should also teach us that what we really need is better promotion of local ideas: what is available to us (as both producers and consumers), and what is just happening in our city, socially and through innovation.

Every day we interact with individuals with a variety of backgrounds and stories, who in turn are friends with more interesting people. Each meeting is an opportunity to be unknown ambassadors of our city, to happily and proudly share what achievements are being done in our community. It's not just a talking point, but such an ambassadorship will make our city even stronger -- there is no better marketing, and testimony, than word of mouth.

We'll hopefully be spinning more great ideas, attracting new people with interest in our community, and making us a much stronger, and closer-knit, Brant County. Leading the way in the green economy is just one way among many to harvest the great potential we have and can access.

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