

Eco waste firm inks \$4.6-M NATO contract

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A small, local business has secured a multi-million dollar contract with a global military entity.

Eco Waste Solutions on Harvester Road bested six companies, mostly from Europe, in winning a contract to supply the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with four mobile waste incinerator systems over the next nine months.

NATO is a 26-country military network that includes Canada.

For Eco Waste, a 13-person outfit that specializes in advanced thermal (heat) treatment technology for solid and liquid waste, the \$4.6-million contract with NATO is the richest in the company's 15-year history in Burlington, said its CEO and president, Steve Meldrum.

"We'll be adding at least two full-time employees, like a millwright and an electrical control specialist," said Meldrum, 39, a Nelson High School graduate.

"We don't want to be in the steel fabrication or refractory (heat-resistant materials) business so that's good news for our suppliers and our major outsourcing partners," he said of some of the work for the project, which will likely be given to area companies.

Meldrum said his staff, which includes engineers and tradespeople, designs the units for the waste disposal systems and later assembles the parts, manufactured elsewhere, at its plant. It then runs the units through a series of tests for performance and emissions compliance.

A NATO representative, who attended the contract announcement, said it identified Eco Waste Solutions as the best fit in terms of price and product quality in seeking someone to supply its temporary military encampments with the technology to neutralize and dispose of the waste produced by military personnel.

"Part of the contract requires Eco Waste to train 20 military people to set up, operate and maintain the systems," said René Roy, project manager of the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA).

Eco Waste's systems consist of five separate units, four for the heating process and one for tools and other materials storage. The company says the system is designed to maximize water reuse while minimizing air emissions. Each system will be able to process up to 2,000 kilograms (4,400 lbs.) of waste per day based on a 500-person camp. The unit being shipped to NATO is 24-ft. by 60 ft.

Roy said basic waste generated by a household, like food and paper, will be burned twice at high temperatures (1,000 C) inside the incineration units. Oxygen is also used with heat to break down potentially toxic compounds.

Ultimately, an ash that is considered safe, and about 10 per cent of the volume of the original waste, is left over.

Glass and metal are recycled separately at the NATO camps. Human waste is treated in separate sewage

facilities on site with the sludge fed into the incinerator.

While some air pollutants are emitted by the units, it is not a concern, said Roy.

“European emission regulations are much stricter than in Canada,” he said.

It is not known yet where the first waste disposal unit will be used or whether it will be in relation to a NATO military or humanitarian relief operation, said Roy. It likely won't happen until late 2010.

If all goes well, Roy said it is possible that NATO could seek more of the containers from Eco Waste Solutions.

Eco Waste says its modular units, which can withstand extremes from Arctic cold to desert heat, are used by companies in North, Central and South America in mainly remote regions where waste treatment facilities are not available. Those using the technology are usually in the military, mining, forestry or oil and gas fields.

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