

Exit makes an entrance

Published Tuesday December 23rd, 2008

Manufacturer of photoluminescent Exit signs plans to open distribution facility in Woodstock



A new business is heading to Carleton County, bringing with it the potential for up to 50 jobs over the next five years.

Ontario manufacturer PNA Group – which makes photoluminescent products, including exit signs and stair treads – will be opening a new facility in Woodstock.

Company president Bob McIntosh announced PNA Group's plans on Dec. 18, during a media conference at the Riverside Court. He said the company was delighted to be coming to Woodstock, adding he expected to secure a suitable location for the new business by the end of the year.

McIntosh described Woodstock's business development officer Gordon Roach as the primary player in bringing his company to town.

"We have a mutual friend," McIntosh said. "We started talking about New Brunswick and I came down."

PNA Group has already made an impact on Woodstock. Their signs were installed in the Town Hall as part of the renovation.

"They're the first installed in New Brunswick," McIntosh said.

Photoluminescent materials have been on the market since the early 1990s, but they were used for less important signs.

Now, according to the company, because of improvements in glow-in-the-dark compounds, the signs can be used in place of older systems.



"The material is becoming very popular," McIntosh said. "They're the only signs guaranteed to work in emergencies."

The signs absorb light from any available source, and use it to power themselves when the lights go out.

The signs are the most environmentally friendly available. They produce no carbon emissions, and are completely non-toxic.

"David Suzuki loves us," McIntosh said.

McIntosh estimated businesses could save thousands of dollars by installing the signs. They are essentially no-maintenance and are guaranteed for up to 25 years.

The company represents a huge growth industry, and has already been contracted by companies and government organizations in New Brunswick and beyond, including Tim Horton's and mega-retailer Wal-Mart.

Cont...

The big growth opportunity will come in the next year or so. The National Building Code for 2010 is going to make this style of sign mandatory.

Local politicians welcomed the company to Woodstock.

"It's a tremendous opportunity," Tobique-Mactaquac MP Mike Allen said.

"The economic impact is going to be tremendous."

"This is a wonderful success story," Woodstock MLA David Alward said. "This is a company that has chosen to come to New Brunswick, period."



The company chose Woodstock because of the easy access to Interstate 95 and New England, and the quicker border crossing at the Woodstock-Houlton crossing.

"Those were big factors in the decision," Mayor Art Slipp said.

"It's an eight hour wait at the border in Windsor," McIntosh said.

McIntosh said he sees a lot of opportunity for his company in Atlantic Canada.

"We're not limited in growth," he said.

The company will start with a distribution centre, employing four or five people, and will gradually expand.

By Bryan Tait