

## **New sign saves both lives and energy**

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### **Safety New building marker retains ambient light, glows for hours in the dark**

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Telegraph-Journal

A new exit sign that operates without electricity could become the entry point for an assembly and shipping plant in Woodstock.

PNA Group, based in Oakville, Ont., has developed a fire exit sign for buildings that absorbs and retains ambient light and glows for hours in the dark. Conventional exit signs run on electricity or battery.

The company, working in partnership with McHenry, Ill.-based Jessup Manufacturing, recently landed contracts with Wal-Mart U.S.A., Tim Hortons, and to outfit a number municipalities and universities.

The agreement with Woodstock isn't yet finalized - the company is also considering London, Ont. - but McIntosh says they're "leaning heavily" towards setting up in the town bordering Maine.

McIntosh said the savings on energy, the improved safety, and the green-friendly materials have all been major selling points.

"Firefighters love our signs because we're the only exit sign that's guaranteed to work in any emergency. We have no energy required and our exit signs always work - they're guaranteed for 25 years," said president and CEO Bob McIntosh, who first began testing the product six years ago.

"With us, there's no wiring, no electricity, you just put it up, and leave it there."

The company will make about \$5 million in sales in 2008, and expects those numbers to double in 2009 and again 2010, McIntosh said.

"I know it sounds ambitious, but the technology is just now getting the accreditations (from safety organizations)," he said.

The facility in the town's industrial park would initially employ 25-30 people to do final assembly work and shipping, but McIntosh says in the next three to five years he'd like to move all manufacturing to Woodstock. For now, the product is manufactured at a plant in Chicago.

One of Woodstock's key attractions is its proximity to the United States, and the short border times, McIntosh said.

"It takes less time and less money to ship from our manufacturing facility in Chicago to Woodstock than it does to Toronto," McIntosh said, adding it's also easier to some countries overseas from Canada rather than the U.S.

Gordan Roach, business development officer for Woodstock, said the border was one of the main selling points during discussions.

"The Woodstock area wouldn't have as much traffic on it (as the borders in southern Ontario), and they have ample staff to process the product as it comes through so it wouldn't be held up, so shipping costs are almost identical," said Roach.

"From Woodstock we've got access to the U.S. eastern sea board, we have access to all the transportation needed, and we have access to a quality work force all at the same time."

Roach and McIntosh were introduced through a mutual associate in Toronto about a year ago.

"We kept talking back and forth and then all of a sudden it was, 'Look we have to do something,' " Roach said.

"In the last 16 months (McIntosh) started coming to market in a serious way. What has happened with the product is it started coming probably at five or six times than the speed he envisioned."

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