

Quantiam wins \$1.4M grant for pilot plant

Petrochemical industry could save billions

DAVID FINLAYSON

Journal Business Writer EDMONTON

Edmonton's Quantiam Technologies got a major assist Monday in its efforts to bring to market patented technology that could save the global petrochemical industry billions of dollars a year.

A \$1.4-million grant from the federal government will allow Quantiam and partner Nova Chemicals to push ahead with a pilot plant to make the manufacture of olefins – the largest group of worldwide petrochemicals – more efficient, CEO Steve Petrone said.

Quantiam's furnace coating process reduces the energy needed to make olefins – used for plastics, lubricants and antifreeze – by as much as 20 per cent. It will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly, Petrone said.

Nova and other public and private partners have committed \$8.3 million to the third phase of the project. "We're very excited and feeling pretty good right now. Competition is fierce and world class, and the technology is too complex for one player," Petrone said. "And in the technology world, a fighting chance is all you get."

Quantiam was one of only 10 projects selected from more than 100 for financial support by Sustainable Technology Development Canada this year.

While Petrone wishes the selection process could be quicker, he said the wait has made the firm meaner and leaner.

The \$10-million next phase is expected to be running at capacity by the end of the year. Quantiam also plans to add 120-140 people to its staff of 14 within three years, Petrone said.

Anita Arduini, Nova's technology business development manager, said the company is always looking at ways to reduce energy costs and Quantiam's technology is very promising.

"We're excited to be a part of this project, especially as Quantiam is a small Alberta company. It makes it easier that they are right here."

Quantiam's process will be tested at Nova's giant Joffre plant, near Stettler, and at a facility in Ontario, she said. Senator Tommy Banks said Quantiam's technology is important for Alberta and Canada, and he hoped people recognize "the critical mass of nanotechnology that's becoming a very big ball in this city."

"You are positioning yourselves as world leaders in groundbreaking technology. And new – and clean – technology is essential to the future of this country."

dfinlayson@thejournal.canwest.com