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MARK VAUGHAN-JACKSON: It's spring — time to think green

Another N.L. company — Aker Solutions Canada — goes carbon neutral

Mark Vaughan-Jackson · Posted: March 23, 2019, 6 a.m. | Updated: March 23, 2019, 6 a.m. | 4 Min Read



Aker Solutions Canada is the latest company in Newfoundland and Labrador to go carbon neutral through the purchase of carbon offsets. The company purchased offsets for its 95-tonne carbon footprint from Sharp Management Inc. and was presented with its certificate Friday in St. John's. (From left) Melissa English-Barbour, Aker's senior health, safety, security and environment (HSSE) manager, Glenn Sharp, Marsha Matthews, Aker's senior HSSE adviser, Aker's vice-president/general manager Dave Billard and Matt Rumboldt, Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Industry Association (NEIA). - Joe Gibbons

It's officially spring. And while sights of green might be a bit scarce out the window, it's getting greener at one more company in Newfoundland and Labrador.

At an event Friday at its downtown St. John's office, Aker Solutions Canada received its ceremonial plaque for going carbon neutral through the purchase of carbon offsets.

I did a column back in the fall about another company going carbon neutral buy buying carbon offsets generated right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That company was Empowered Homes, the firm behind Mysa Smart Thermostats, and it bought a bushel of offsets from Sharp Management Ltd.

On Friday, Aker Solutions Canada took the plunge and took the same route to go carbon neutral — buying 95 tonnes of carbon offsets from Glenn Sharp, head of Sharp Management Ltd.

Sharp sells carbon offsets generated by green engineered wetland water treatment systems in Stephenville, Appleton-Glenwood and Bishop's Falls. (Read my earlier column for details on how that works.)

In essence, for every tonne of carbon these systems save by not requiring generated power, a carbon credit is created that can be sold to a company like Aker that wants to do its part and reduce its carbon footprint.

Aker actually bought a single carbon offset from Sharp earlier last year. It was interested in doing more, but wasn't clear on exactly what its total carbon footprint was.

So the company set about finding that out through the Climate Smart program offered by the St. John's Board of Trade.

The program guided Aker through the process of reviewing its operations and calculating its total carbon footprint.

"We learned how to do it on our own through Climate Smart — and kudos to the Board of Trade on rolling that out," Dave Billard, Aker's vice-president and general manager, told me Friday afternoon.

Within Climate Smart there are three levels of carbon offsets: Level 1, 2 and 3.

"Level 1 and Level 2 covers all your people and all your facilities and everything you have in your control. That doesn't cover jet planes, if you know what I mean," he said. "We focused on Level 1 and Level 2 so we can neutralize our carbon footprint from our offices and our people here and our trucks here and the things that we have in our control."

At the end of the program, Aker calculated its carbon footprint was 94.05 tonnes a year.

They got back in touch with Sharp to talk about going whole hog and offsetting their entire carbon footprint for 2018.

At \$25 per tonne, that brought Aker's cost for one year of carbon offsets to \$2,375. And Aker will continue to offset its footprint and be carbon neutral in future years, too.

Billard said going carbon neutral is a bit of a no brainer for the company.

"It's the right thing to do. We don't need a government to tell us to do it, we don't need to be regulated to do it," he said.

Billard pointed to last week's walkout by students in St. John's. They were taking part in the global series of school strikes sparked by Swedish activist teen Greta Thunberg calling for more action from governments on climate change.

"It's like the kids up on the hill said on Friday: someone's got to start doing something about it," Billard said. "So rather than just talk about it, we're doing something about it."

"It's not that big a contribution to have to make to operate and do our business here (as a carbon neutral operation.)"

And buying offsets at \$25 per tonne to achieve carbon neutral status isn't a big expense for a company or even individuals to pay, Glenn Sharp added.

"This isn't a huge cost for companies to look at going carbon neutral. And if they have a big carbon footprint, companies can start looking at (offsetting) 10 per cent, 25 per cent, 50 per cent (of their carbon footprint)," he said. "Individuals can look at it, too, because their carbon footprint may only be 10 to 20 tonnes."

Using made-in-Newfoundland offsets to go carbon neutral is a good route for people here to do their part for the environment, Sharp said.

"I'm very proud to provide Newfoundland individuals and companies an opportunity to reduce their carbon footprint through carbon offsets generated right here," Sharp said. "We all have a carbon footprint, but anyone and everyone can purchase carbon offsets to eliminate their car's pollution, a holiday down south or your company's energy consumption."

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