

Nfld. & Labrador

Becoming N.L.'s first carbon-neutral company was just part of the mission for Mysa

Fighting climate change is the goal, says CEO Joshua Green of company that makes smart thermostats

Terri Coles - CBC News - Posted: Nov 18, 2019 6:00 AM NT | Last Updated: November 18, 2019



Natasha Reid and Joshua Green stand at Mysa's headquarters in St. John's. (Ted Blades/CBC)

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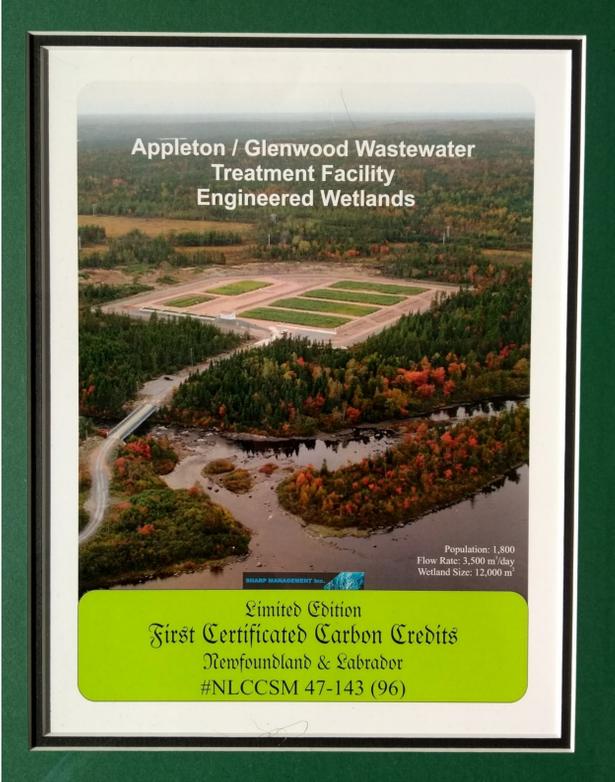
Becoming the first carbon-neutral company in Newfoundland and Labrador sounds like an ambitious undertaking, but Mysa co-founder Joshua Green says it was actually pretty simple — and considering that his company's core purpose is to fight climate change, it just made sense to do it.

"It's about showing leadership," said Green, the company's CEO.

"We know that this is the right thing to do ethically and socially, and we want to be a leader in setting an example of what we believe that companies should be doing."

The proof is in the plaque on a wall at the two-floor headquarters of the company, which sells the smart thermostats designed for baseboard and in-floor electric heating.

The plaque marks the company's carbon-neutral status for 2018 alongside a picture of the Appleton-Glenwood Wastewater Treatment Facility, the facility that generated the carbon credits that got Mysa to its neutral status.



This plaque represents Mysa's carbon-neutral status for 2018. (Ted Blades/CBC)

The treatment plant generates carbon credits, which Mysa purchases through Sharp Management, which is also based in Newfoundland and Labrador.

What are carbon credits?

Simply put, carbon credits — also referred to as carbon offsets — are credits given for one party's reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that can be purchased to offset the emissions of another party. The credits are usually measured in tonnes of CO2-equivalents.

The carbon credits sold by Sharp Management are generated by the wastewater treatment facilities in Appleton-Glenwood and Stephenville. Those facilities generate credits through the reduced emissions of the engineered wetlands used for wastewater treatment.

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Mysa then purchases some of the credits generated by the treatment facilities, through Sharp Consulting, in order to offset the emissions their company produces through various business activities: flights to and from meetings, commutes to and from work, electricity use at their office.

"All of the money that we use to purchase these stays right here in Newfoundland and beyond that, 50 per cent of it actually goes to the municipalities that actually partnered to generate these carbon credits," Green said.

Calculating those credits for each year can be done in an afternoon. Using a spreadsheet, they work out the numbers for every employee's commute, every flight, all the electricity used, and other carbon-producing activities.

"Through that we're able to generate how much carbon we've released into the atmosphere over the year," said Natasha Reid, Mysa's utility relations manager.

Behave, then buy

Before carbon credits for emissions are calculated, however, the company does all it can to get those emissions as low as possible. That involves initiatives like reducing energy use and diverting waste to composting and recycling. Those efforts have gotten emissions down by about 20 per cent, Green estimated.

Mysa also gets its employees involved through monthly challenges. In September, for example, the company's 54 employees were challenged to reduce the emissions of their commutes to work. The next month they collected clothing donations for the Gathering Place and held a used clothing swap at the office.

“It's a win for the environment and it's a win financially as well.”

- Josh Green

"Textile waste and fast fashion is one of the most polluting industries in the world when it comes to toxic chemicals and water pollution," Reid said.

Doing that work to reduce emissions first, then offset them, is the right move for the environment but it also makes sense from a business perspective, Green said.

"It actually incentivizes us from a financial point of view to reduce our emissions so that we have to buy less offsets," he said.

"So it's a win for the environment and it's a win financially as well, when we first reduce."

Mysa may have been the first company in the province to go carbon-neutral, but they're no longer the only one. Aker Solutions Canada announced it was also carbon-neutral earlier this year, and at a recent conference another company expressed their desire to do the same, Reid said.

"It's very inspiring, actually, to see how other people react," she said.

"The reality is you don't need a few people doing zero waste perfectly, you just need millions of people doing what they can."

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