

Your Business ... Your Burlington

Burlington firm shines with solar

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BURLINGTON A local company's aggressive moves in the alternative energy business have helped its workforce grow by almost one-third in the past year, drawing high praise from Ontario's minister of energy.



Energy minister tours Burlington plant MPPs visited Satcon, a Burlington manufacturer of clean energy products, to help announce the addition of 40 new jobs at the plant. Here, Energy Minister Brad Duguid, left, and local MPP Ted McMeekin are seen touring the plant. Also on hand was local MPP and cabinet minister Sophia Aggelonitis.

Ron Albertson/The Hamilton Spectator

Brad Duguid toured [Satcon Power Systems Canada](#) on Tuesday to draw attention to the Burlington company's rapid growth and the importance of finding new sources of electricity. The company, on Harrington Court near Walker's Line, has expanded its workforce by 40 jobs and now employs 158 people.

"I want to say thank-you for believing in this province and making the investments you have made," he told the company's managers and workers. "You are the pioneers of the clean energy economy that will shape our future."

Satcon, the Canadian arm of a Boston-based firm, manufactures power inversion equipment for the global utilities industry. Satcon's inverters convert direct-current (DC) power from solar arrays to alternating current (AC) power that can be exported to the electricity grid.

That's a business that has been growing rapidly around the world — Satcon's sales rose 480 per cent last year. Its products are sold across North America and in countries such as China, France, Germany, Italy, Greece and the Czech Republic.

Satcon is one of more than 20 companies that have announced new or expanded manufacturing plants in Ontario to meet the growing demand for parts for the solar and wind industry.

As the demand for electricity grows, and coal-fired stations are taken out of service, the search for alternative ways of generating electricity has intensified, giving a market advantage to firms with the right products at the right time.

Businesses like that, Duguid said, are critical to Ontario's hopes for an economic recovery.

"Companies like this are important to that next generation of jobs we're trying to create in Ontario," he said. "They're another indication that Ontario is becoming a clean energy powerhouse."

Duguid said that means jobs for the companies serving the growing alternative energy market, and jobs from the firms Ontario will attract with reliable, cost-efficient power.

"There is no question that Ontario's economy is roaring back and clean energy is leading the way," he said. "Businesses won't come to Ontario without a reliable supply of power."

At Satcon, and later in a meeting with The Hamilton Spectator's editorial board, Duguid admitted not all aspects of Ontario's energy policy have been well received — families have complained about sharply higher costs, neighbours of wind farm sites have complained about noise and other concerns, and opposition leaders have attacked the government for moving too quickly with its plans.

The cost issues are being answered with the provincial energy benefit he said should shave \$150 a year off electricity costs for families; planning issues are answered by requiring those issues to be "addressed" when wind farm sites are being chosen.

Opposition leaders, he added, are simply playing politics to discredit the government ahead of the election in October.

"We've reached a stage where it's time to call out the leaders of the opposition," he told The Spectator's opinion makers. "You can't have a clean, efficient energy system for free."

"The time to rebuild our economy is now," he added. "If we wait, other jurisdictions will seize the opportunity. It's time for us to make these challenging decisions that are not always easy."

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