
Funding will create 375 new WESCAM jobs

The Hamilton Spectator/September 17, 2010

Burlington-based security imaging manufacturer L-3 WESCAM has received a \$17.5 million provincial grant to develop and research smaller and lighter imaging technology.

Minister of Economic Development and Trade Sandra Pupatello yesterday made the announcement that will help create hundreds of jobs at the company's headquarters, on North Service Road West.

Pupatello said the funding will go toward the company's development of lighter equipment that will provide clearer images from greater distances and under harsher conditions. "This is very important in the aerospace industry. Just like the auto industry and everything else, they're looking for lighter, more fuel (efficient technology)," she said.

The funding will create 375 new jobs and keep 555 existing positions over the next five years, L-3 WESCAM president, John Dehne, said.

The provincial grant also allows the company to tap into a different type of customer, he said. "For us, it's a brand new market because (the new product) is down to a small, nimble size. It has to be cheaper, lighter," he said, adding the equipment can be installed on smaller aircraft or used by police forces.

Although the manufacturing sector has taken a hit recently, the Burlington company is "bucking the trend," Pupatello said.

While the company is an aerospace business, the first customer for the MX-10, their latest product, is General Dynamics Land Systems, a land and amphibious combat system manufacturer.

The MX-10 will be delivered first to the land systems company next month and then to a wide range of customers in subsequent months, Dehne said.

The provincial money will also help them convert existing products from analogue to digital, Dehne said. "(That means) better resolution and better ability to process imagery. That means longer range," he said.

The new MX-10 imaging technology is about 10.4 inches in diameter and 35 pounds, while the MX-20 and MX-15 weigh 185 pounds and 100 pounds, respectively.

“This is a great example of having a product that offers better efficiencies for their customers so even when things might be slow, they’re still looking to improve their product line,” she said.

In March, L-3 WESCAM was awarded a \$110-million contract from the U.S. air force to supply a stream of its “eye-in-the-sky” infrared imaging turrets, as well as training courses and programs.

Mayor Cam Jackson said the new high-tech jobs created by yesterday’s announcement represents the “future for our province and our country.”

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