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## \$3.1M to develop Atlas Advanced Manufacturing Park

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WELLAND — A few years ago Stefanos Horianopoulos invented something remarkable.

It's a patented device to harness energy from passing traffic.

In a process he calls Kinergypower, hydraulic pistons are used to create energy as vehicles drive over the device that could be used to replace speed humps, or be set into the pavement.

In 2005, Horianopoulos was at a city council meeting to discuss that invention.

It was a presentation city council never forgot.

And now, the city is helping Horianopoulos make his business dreams a reality.

Goulbourne invited Horianopoulos to the old Atlas Steels office building Thursday for a special announcement.

A few weeks ago, Goulbourne said the city learned it will receive \$3.1 million in FedDev funding to develop the Atlas Advanced Manufacturing Park (AAMP).

Building on that announcement, Goulbourne said the city recently received about \$200,000 in federal government funding for a six-month project to assist small- and medium-sized businesses "to help them innovate and to help them adapt to the changing marketplace so that in the future they will be able to manage the highs and lows of these tough economic times."

The program will help link those businesses with government services, programs and funding that's available to assist them, as well as all the support that's available at post-secondary institutions.

"Most people don't know what government programs are out there and if they can tap into them, how that can lead to job creation," the mayor said. "They also don't know what are the services that Niagara College can provide for businesses."

Although Welland has only received funding for six months, Goulbourne said the city anticipates additional funding to extend the project to 18 months.

The program is being run by Amy Lemay from VISTA Science & Technology Inc. out of the old Atlas Specialty Steels office building on Centre St., recently renovated by developer Steve Curic.

"We're taking out a few offices here and really breathing new life into it. We believe we can turn this building into a centre for innovation for advanced manufacturing. Once we start to help these companies get on their feet, they'll be looking for office space. And they'll be looking for a place to be home base, and maybe this will be that home base."

Goulbourne said Horianopoulos's company seemed ideal as the first client for that new program — and the city also has plans for the product he created.

Although municipalities can't provide financial incentives to businesses, Goulbourne said they can be customers.

"The best way to support Stefanos is probably to be his first customer," he said.

"We have been waiting for this project because we want you to be the first client, in terms of helping you," the mayor told Horianopoulos.

The mayor said a staff report will be coming to council in the near future, recommending that Horianopoulos's device be installed at the Welland Transit Terminal.

The weight of the buses travelling over the device should create enough energy to power the terminal building.

For Horianopoulos, it's an opportunity to showcase the device to show the world what it's capable of doing.

"Hopefully if we can set up the first pilot project in Canada and the first one in the world, we can showcase our device and then hopefully we can get into manufacturing," Horianopoulos said.

As a former welder at the Dain City plant that's closing entirely by early next year, Horianopoulos has a good understanding of the amount of talent this city has that could eventually help manufacture his product.

"There are about 800 people who are out of work and let's face it, there are not too many jobs available," he said.

However, he said this area has "all these personnel that have all these abilities in manufacturing, in trades."

"I think this is an opportunity for any business to come and start up here. You don't have to retrain workers. Everything is available in this area."

Welland economic development officer Dan Degazio said after talking about plans for an advanced manufacturing park for years, the city has finally reached the point "that we can actually do it."

Working with Horianopoulos is something he said the city is very excited about.

"This is going to bring new energy and new cost savings to many different segments of communities, whether it be a school or a public building, or an industrial building or whatever it might be, it's going to save a lot of money for people in the future," Degazio said.

Niagara College is an important partner in the overall project, offering its assistance to the businesses that will participate in the program.

While college president Dan Patterson said he's pleased about the city's initiative, he said he's also "anxious to find out more about it and how it will materialize."

"We see it as an opportunity to have the clients that come here access the college resources," he said.

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