

# UPFRONT

## ecoTECH Job Fair

DANIEL BETTS  
EDITOR

Optimism, hope and excitement are the emotions that best described the atmosphere at the ecoTECH Job Fair at the Robson Valley Community Hall on Saturday, October 29. The much publicized and anticipated event was well attended by both McBride residents and visitors from Valemount, Prince George and Jasper. By near the close of the event approximately 150 resumes had been received for the 236 permanent and temporary anticipated jobs needed to build and maintain ecoTECH Energy Group's planned aquaculture, horticulture and combined heat and power station (CHP) facilities. It is estimated one third of the visitors were from outside the McBride area.

Besides ecoTECH, the Robson Valley Home Support Society, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, Scotia Bank, McBride Realty Center Ltd., and the College of New Caledonia set up booths to offer their assistance and information to prospective applicants.

Colin Hall, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of ecoTECH Energy Group was in attendance to answer questions about his company's plan to build a biomass-fuelled power station that produces renewable and sustainable "green" energy products, in McBride. Hall thanked attendees for coming to the job fair and showing their interest. "We are certain the facility will accommodate many different skill sets and unskilled sets, I think that is important," said Hall. He noted that the worldwide industry ecoTECH plans to bring to McBride is coming to a point where it is being recognized as the short term answer to food shortages around the globe. He also stated that production from the facility has already been presold. "We are in the happy situation of having everything sold for at least the first three years of production," said Hall.

Besides learning more about the eco-industrial

park some very interesting partnerships and economic spinoffs were revealed during the event. One of the more significant partnerships involved the unique training opportunities soon to be available through the College of New Caledonia (CNC). Jennifer Eckford, M.Sc., RPF, Horticulture Instructor at the CNC Quesnel Campus was very excited to hear of ecoTECH's project and job fair. "What a great opportunity to network," declared Eckford. About a month before the job fair CNC and Hall had a brainstorming meeting to discuss ideas on how the college could assist with the training of ecoTECH employees. Ideas discussed included a cooperative training program and workshops to intensive weekend or weeklong trainings that would result in a designation or achievement toward basic botany, horticulture and vermiculture. "It would provide some basic background for employees who have no knowledge or background in horticulture. It gives them some foundation to go with," said Eckford. "We see a great partnership involved here." While nothing is finalized, CNC is very interested in providing the training that people will need. The commitment and interest "goes hand in hand."

Mayor Mike Frazier was also in attendance for the entire length of the job fair. With gratitude he acknowledged the partnerships between the Village of McBride and ecoTECH, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, including Director Ken Starchuck, CNC, Scotia Bank, McBride Realty Center Ltd., and the Robson Valley Support Society in for their assistance in organizing the event.

The Robson Valley Support Society was on hand as part of their Employment Assistance Service to help attendees with the application process as well as either answer their questions or direct their questions to the appropriate source.

McBride Realty Center Ltd. was on hand to answer questions about area real estate and relocation options. EcoTECH has established their temporary office at the McBride Realty Center Ltd., where perspective applicants can continue to drop off applications and resumes.

Scotia Bank was on hand to answer the attendee's personal financial questions and provide additional friendly faces for those outside the Valley to speak to about the McBride area.

Executive Vice President Administration, Anne Sanders, was taking the applications and answering questions. "This is exciting," said Sanders. "We got lots of local applicants which is great because we want to hire locally." Saunders said many of the jobs people are applying for are high-end jobs but noted there are many skilled people in McBride. "Seems like many people came to McBride for the same reason we (ecoTECH) came; we love the area," said Sanders. "To work in a field that either you already have some interest in or you are trained in is great." Sanders said since they are hiring for both unskilled to skilled jobs there is much opportunity for locals. Sanders spoke of the continuing discussion with CNC around training. "We will need trained people," said Sanders. Employment opportunities with ecoTECH will range from basic nine to five jobs to exciting careers in a growing and vital industry.

The project will move forward in stages and employees will have the opportunity to progress as the project moves forward, starting with construction. Sanders said



**"Job fair answers many questions"**

Above: Large turnout at McBride Community Hall on Saturday, October 29, 2011 of people interested in the ecoTECH project. Below: Jennifer Eckford, instructor at the College of New Caledonia talks to prospective employees about exciting training opportunities.

Upper Right: Mayor Mike Frazier introduces the speakers and welcomes the crowd.

Centre Right: Anne Saunders receives an application from a prospective employee.

Bottom Right: ecoTECH CEO Colin Hall

Photos by Andrea Scholz



they expect the first produce to leave the facility in February 2013.

Margaret Graine, Economic Development Officer for the Village of McBride was most pleased with the success of the job fair. She noted that while this initial job fair would help to gauge community interest, she expects a larger job fair event to be organized for this spring and will include many other McBride and area businesses. "I counted the applications that were submitted and was moved by some posted comments. The one that really stuck with me was, 'I just want a job...any job,'" said Graine. "We want to make things happen as soon as we are able."

Resumes can be submitted to: info@ecth.ca.

Applications can also be dropped off at McBride Realty Center Ltd, located at 277 Main Street.

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