The Greening Economy: Private Sector/Government Collaboration

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We have been reflecting on the threats and opportunities the environment poses to economic sustainability. Many have noted the economy is increasingly removed from nature and natural processes. Our natural resources are being consumed at an unsustainable rate. The Earth's ecosystems cannot survive relentless growth in economic production and consumption. The environmental impact of unbridled economic production and global consumption is well-known (see James Bonar's February 19, 2017 article, Economic Sustainability & the Environment). The related problems of waste and contaminants, however, are complex, often contentious, and in need of urgent solutions.

One prominent example is plastics: Plastics are undoubtedly one of the great inventions of the 20th Century. They provide the world with lightweight, useful and durable products and packaging. It is projected that the production of plastics will exceed 700 million tons annually by 2050. The bad news: Most plastic packaging products are used only once. One third of our plastic ends up in the natural environment, where it remains for centuries (New Plastics Economy, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, January 19, 2016). Some 8 million tons of plastic leak from land into the world's oceans every year (Jambeck et al, Science Magazine, Feb. 2015). This has a dire, cumulative effect on our habitat: Some species of whales, for example, are near extinction due to pollution caused by dumping toxic plastic waste into the oceans.

Successful companies and forward-looking governments understand the threat to the environment of unbridled production, consumption and waste. They also see the opportunity to reinvent a greener and more sustainable economy for generations to come.

Plastics can be produced to be either non-bio-degradable or bio-degradable. Fortunately, bio-degradable plastics are increasingly used in industry to help reduce the harmful effects of non-bio-degradable plastics. Paul Bisson has been actively involved in a most promising venture between various levels of government in Canada and a UK-based bio-degradation technology company -- Polymateria -- based in London. Its mission is to help combat the global crisis of plastic pollution through scientific innovation and excellence. While there are a number of competitors in the 'green plastic' space, most are wedded to a specific technology – e.g., bio-plastics, oxo-bio-degradable plastics. Different applications require different technologies, however. The competitive advantage of Polymateria's is that it offers clients a 'total solution'; it both assists its clients to determine the best technology and then develop formulae for their particular situations.

In order to expand its North American operations, Polymateria considered setting up a production plant in the United States. It explored various sites, but found little state and federal support for bio-degradable technology. It then mandated Paul Bisson to examine Canadian government incentive programs and help identify appropriate sites.

As a seasoned corporate executive and management consultant, Paul has extensive experience in securing private sector/government partnerships. Ultimately, Polymateria chose the National Capital Region (NCR), comprising the cities of Gatineau, Québec and Ottawa, Ontario. The NCR offers the necessary government support, skilled work force, and scalable infrastructure to serve the entire continental market. Moreover, production costs in Canada are very competitive. The mayors of both cities as well as the Minister of the Federal Department of the Environment and Climate Change have enthusiastically welcomed the arrival of the British green tech firm. The first phase of Polymateria's operations in Canada will be up and running in

the latter part of 2018. The total production for the first year is already pre-sold. The plant has the capabilities to expand to 10 phases within the next three to five years, creating some 800 highly skilled direct and indirect jobs. Growth prospects are strong, with the global bio-plastics market expected to reach US $43.8 B by 2020 (Ankush Nikam, “Bio-plastics Market Expected to Grow at CAGR of 28.8% During 2014 – 2020”, LANEWS.org, December 28, 2017).

This example of private sector/government collaboration illustrates the opportunity for communities to develop an innovative and technologically compelling economy that is green, profitable and sustainable. Paul Bisson and James de Gaspé Bonar are committed to assisting green companies to tackle the financing and leadership challenges required to achieve long-term success.