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Trade fair is where green economy meets the road

BY DERRICK PENNER, VANCOUVER SUN MARCH 26, 2010 COMMENTS (2)

STORY PHOTOS (1)



Frank Cloutier, Director of Future Vehicle Technologies shows off the company's Evaro high-performance auto designed to achieve greater than 100 miles-per-gallon fuel efficiency, at the Globe 2010 trade fair.

Photograph by: Ian Lindsay, PNG

VANCOUVER - Future Vehicle Technologies' entry to the Globe 2010 trade show looks more like a jet fighter ready to rocket off the Vancouver Convention Centre's floor than an environmentally friendly automobile.

It is a radical sports car, however, the third-generation prototype of FVT's Evaro, the Maple-Ridge based company's entry into the Automotive X Prize competition, which aims to encourage maximum fuel efficiency in high-performance automobiles.

And it was one of more than 400 exhibitors at the Globe 2010 trade fair looking to connect with other like-minded entrepreneurs to do business.

"This is a car that we do intend to build," FVT director Frank Cloutier said in an interview, while a stream of attendees swarmed around the racy roadster's sleek cockpit.

It is a high-performance auto designed to do zero to 60 miles per hour in under five seconds, but will do it using an electric power plant, with a gas-hybrid backup, while getting more than 100 miles per gallon fuel economy.

FVT's immediate goal is to win the Automotive X Prize race, a \$10-million award from the X-Prize Foundation, which will go to the team that can design and race the fastest, most fuel-efficient automobile.

Eventually, however, Cloutier hopes they are coming up with technologies that can be put into wide use to reduce the fuel consumption of cars, and by extension cut down on air pollution from

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consumption of cars, and by extension cut down on air pollution from transportation, the No. 1 source of global air emissions.

The idea, he added, is to make it technologically possible for a person to travel 1,000 kilometres on "a few dollars worth of fuel," while still using a personal form of transportation, which most people still desire.

"[The design] is a radical departure, but not just to be a radical departure," Cloutier said. "It really does hit between the eyes of the core needs of society."

Meeting societal needs, while being more environmentally conscious, was the point of the trade fair.

While the Globe Foundation's biennial conference on business and the environment tackled high-level strategic discussions on the theory of a green economy, the trade fair put business people on the floor to put it into practice.

"We're a multi-sector environmental business-to-business trade show, and the object is for people to do business," Pat Row, a Globe 2010 account executive said.

Over 20 years of putting the show together, Row said the Globe Foundation's staff "pretty well know who is who" in the environment business, and with the show they try and bring them together.

Exhibitors ranged from the visionary, like Future Vehicle Technologies, to the more mundane, like Made By Humans, a Vancouver-based distributor of stationery and novelty gift items, such as pencils made from recycled bamboo paper, pencil cases made from recycled plastic and its signature product, the "staple-free" stapler.

Company president Carry Heijman explained that instead of punching a little piece of metal through paper to attach sheets together, his product punches a hole through the sheets that creates a tab that stitches through the paper to attach them.

He quoted a figure from the United Kingdom where it was estimated that if every person used one staple per day, it would equal 72 tonnes of metal that would probably wind up as waste.

"So you can imagine the scale, if people use staples every day, what you gain by using a staple-free stapler," Heijman said.

Heijman said he was at first skeptical about exhibiting at Globe 2010, but by its second day was convinced the effort would more than pay off in orders from the contacts he and his staff were making out of the steady stream of curious passersby looking for demonstrations of the stapler.

And he was encouraged by taking part in it.

"You see more and more people within a capitalist system make a profit by developing green products," Heijman said, "so it's in our interest to do it."

Not all displays were aimed at making direct sales.

Mining firm Teck Resources Ltd. used Globe 2010 to promote its electronic-waste recycling efforts, with some eye-catching visual aids: samples of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic medals.

Teck's Alison Adrain explained that the company sent 6.8 tonnes of old electronic circuit boards collected in the recycling program to the company Umicore in Belgium, which threw it into its smelter to extract the gold, silver and other precious metals contained in their solders.

And some of those reclaimed metals, she said, wound up as a fraction of material (about one per cent in gold, less than one per cent in silver and

Speech impediment

The opening of a new movie "The King's Speech" is putting the chronic condition of stuttering in the



material (about one per cent in gold, less than one per cent in silver and bronze) in the medals.

And not all exhibitors were out to make a profit. The U.K.-based World Clean Air Initiative (WCAFI) was there looking to drum up interest in its Clean Air Tree Kits, a fundraising item to support its efforts to increase environmental awareness.

"It's a perfect fit," WCAFI managing director Andrew Potheary said. "[Globe 2010] is all about clean air and the environment," and his organization encourages people to plant carbon-dioxide-gulping trees.

Sold for \$5, the kits come as a hard potato-starch plastic ball, which contains a biodegradable pot that contains, for Canada, 10 white spruce seeds. And for every kit sold and planted, Potheary said WCAFI commits to planting a tree in a developing country in need of some reforestation.

And whether it was big business, such as Mitsubishi promoting its innovative electric vehicle, the I-Miev, or small business like Made By Humans, there is a growing urgency to produce less environmentally damaging products.

"We're hearing from customers," Heijman said "Point blank, 'do you have green products?' And you'd better answer yes."

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