

Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies Inc.

2011 BCBusiness Guide to Innovation

Peter Severinson | Image: Catherine Mullaly | Published: April 04, 2011



The number four innovator in B.C., whose innovation comes with a good cause.

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It's nice to find a local company helping make the world a cleaner place, but when that's combined with an innovative business plan, it's truly something to celebrate. Such is the case with Ostara, whose business is removing phosphorus from waste water. The naturally occurring element can cause excess algae growth and oxygen depletion if released into

waterways.

Pretty good, but as one of our panellists points out, "if it was just that, it would be just another technology innovation." But phosphorus also happens to be a crucial fertilizer, without which modern agriculture would be impossible. So rather than mine it out of the ground, why not mine it out of our waste? That's exactly what Ostara's eight-metre-tall funnel-shaped contraption accomplishes, using a chemical reaction to extract phosphorus in a pellet form that can be sold as a high-quality fertilizer.

Aside from the obvious eco benefits, this allows for a unique business model: after a municipality has installed a system, Ostara will sell the phosphorus to its fertilizer customers, using the revenues to offset the system's operating costs.

Ostara has four systems in operation: in Edmonton; Tigard, Oregon; Suffolk, Virginia; and York, Pennsylvania. Agreements are in place to build two more: one in Madison, Wisconsin, and another for Thames Water Utilities Ltd., Britain's biggest water and sewage company, serving London and the Thames Valley.

"It's a great story," our panellist agrees. "It appeals to the green and it appeals to the capitalist in all of us."

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