

[Back to Hamilton: Canada's invisible cleantech scene](#)

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Earlier this week in New York City a research and investor organization co-founded by a Canadian released a much anticipated list of the world's 100 most promising clean technology companies.

The Cleantech Group, whose executive chairman and co-founder is Toronto devotee Nicholas Parker, asked the question: Which private clean technology companies are likely to make the most significant market impact over the next five to 10 years?

The organization sent this question to hundreds of folks in the broader global cleantech community. Venture capital investment data was mined. In the end, a list of 3,138 companies was compiled. Using a variety of filters and ranking criteria, that list was whittled down to a short list of 218.

The final list of 100 companies was determined by an expert investor panel composed of 60 people from North America, Europe and Asia.

In the end, only two Canadian companies made the final cut, putting Canada in the same league as Sweden, France, Norway, Switzerland and The Netherlands.

The United Kingdom had more than five times as many companies. The United States dominated with 55.

One of the two Canadian companies on the list is Montreal-based Enerkem, which has a gasification technology that can turn a variety of municipal and industrial solid wastes into ethanol fuel.

Enerkem broke ground on its first municipal waste-to-biofuel facility in August. The \$75-million plant is in Edmonton and will be able to produce 36 million litres of ethanol annually. The company is building a similar facility in Mississippi that will be twice the size, and is proving that it makes more sense to chemically convert waste into fuel than to burn it for electricity.

The other Canuck on the list is Vancouver-based Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies, which has developed a way to extract nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen from municipal wastewater and turn them into eco-friendly commercial fertilizer.

To date, Ostara has built commercial nutrient-recovery facilities in Oregon, Virginia and Pennsylvania. It also has a demonstration facility operating in Edmonton, which combined with its Enerkem facility is clearly setting the standard for municipal waste management in Canada.

Enerkem and Ostara are well-deserving companies, and together they show that one of Canada's clean technology strengths is in managing and treating waste to create revenue-generating products.

But their recognition is hardly a reason to crack the champagne. The results are disappointing in that they fail to reflect the quality and depth of Canada's cleantech scene. In the area of lighting technology alone I can identify three standouts – Halifax's LED Roadway Lighting, Toronto's Cavet Technologies and Fifth Light of Oakville.

All producing product. All generating revenues. All poised to make a big impact.

Why isn't the world recognizing the ground-breaking desalination technology developed by Vancouver-based Saltworks Technologies, or the work of Toronto's Morgan Solar, which has developed and is now manufacturing one of the lowest cost – if not *the* lowest cost – solar photovoltaic systems in the world?

On Oct. 26 the magazine *Corporate Knights* will release its list of the Top 10 most promising clean technology companies in Canada. Cavet, Morgan Solar and Saltwork are on the list, which was developed by an advisory panel that included yours truly. Unfortunately, these Canadian success stories have a more difficult time getting noticed beyond our borders.

The Cleantech Group explains that its global selection process is akin to a reality-TV show, “using a combination of wider input and narrow expert judging.” In other words, it’s just as much as a popularity contest as it is a reflection of true performance and potential.

So what’s the message here? I asked Henry Vehovec of CleanTech North, an industry consortium trying to accelerate the awareness and adoption of Canadian clean technologies. He also sits on the investment committee of cleantech-funding agency Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

“Canada certainly has more than two of the best 100 cleantech companies in the world,” said Vehovec. “But this lack of representation is a recurring theme in Canadian technology. We produce great work and then underperform when it comes to marketing, finance and distribution.”

There’s a need, as Vehovec said, to start “owning the podium.” Indeed, maybe next year we can out-rank Switzerland.

Tyler Hamilton writes weekly about green energy and clean technologies. Contact him through www.cleanbreak.ca