

Bay Street firm celebrates three years in clean-tech field

Green energy a growing area of practice

BY DARYL-LYNN CARLSON
For Law Times

While Ontario has introduced several programs to

encourage clean energy, there's a relative dearth of law firms with official practices in the field.

Ogilvy Renault LLP, however, was one of the first major

firms to establish a group specifically geared towards facilitating clean-tech developments largely through service to corporate clients.

Richard Sutin, a senior partner

at Ogilvys in Toronto and co-chairman of the firm's clean-tech group, says he initiated the practice group to help leading-edge companies that were entering the alternative energy field. "What we identified was that the clean-tech sector segment of the economy was going to become a broad industry. If you had the expertise to bring to that sector, you could be a leader."

In turn, the firm has gained expertise in a number of fields related to alternative energy providers and is helping to facilitate financing based on each project's viability. "There's a huge issue regarding affordability, so we think this will help," Sutin says.

The firm celebrated its clean-tech practice's third anniversary with an educational session at the MaRS Discovery District in downtown Toronto last week. In the meantime, other firms and their lawyers have also been active in the sector. Aaron Atcheson, a partner at Miller Thomson LLP in London, Ont., who spent two years with Matheson Ormsby Prentice in Ireland, had the advantage of learning the European approach to alternative energy that allowed him to bring back ideas to improve the implementation of related projects in Canada.

Atcheson notes that while the Ontario government purports to be ahead of the curve, it could do more to approve alternative energy projects and reduce the red tape. "In Ontario, some projects that have received approval haven't been built. We have gone backwards a bit compared to what the Irish have done."

Atcheson, who is the leader of Miller Thomson's national clean-tech practice group, compares the situation here with European countries that



"We have gone backwards a bit compared to what the Irish have done," says Aaron Atcheson, whose firm has been active in clean energy.

chose to endorse projects based on their potential success.

Greg Payne is a Canadian representative for Investeco Financial Corp., an investment company that facilitates green-sector businesses in the southern United States and has set out to provide financing for companies here that offer viable alternative energy projects. A keynote speaker at the Ogilvy event at the MaRS centre, he said Investeco is changing its name to Greenchip Financial next month to better reflect the types of businesses it hopes to finance.

"I really think we're looking that over the next few decades, there is pressure to reduce energy prices," said Payne.

As a result, he expects cities to invest heavily in public transit as fuel prices rise.

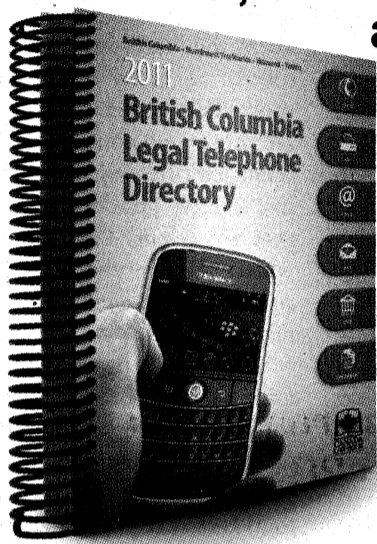
He also noted there was a consensus among professionals that the so-called green-tech area of law will soon become an exclusive and highly specialized area of practice that firms will need to become participants in. **LT**

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