

## Biotech firm moves to Edmonton

Vancouver-based Radient extracts plant compounds for use in drugs, cosmetics

BY BILL MAH, EDMONTON JOURNAL SEPTEMBER 19, 2009



David Cox, CEO of Radient Technologies, left TEC Edmonton two weeks ago to head Radient. The company expects to hire 30-40 new workers in Edmonton.

**Photograph by:** Rick MacWilliam, The Journal, Edmonton Journal

A company named Radient Technologies Inc. is casting a ray of optimism over Edmonton's cloudy biotechnology sector.

The Vancouver-based firm with operations in Burlington, Ont., and Whitby, Ont., is moving to Edmonton, its new city-based CEO announced Friday.

"Effectively immediately, the entire company is relocating all operations to Edmonton," said David Cox, who left his position as CEO of business incubator TEC Edmonton two weeks ago to head Radient after he was approached by a recruiter.

"We have an excellent supply of qualified people to grow our company, a fantastic university and we're in an agricultural province with access to raw materials for our processes.

"Perhaps most importantly, we have a strategic financing partner in AVAC, and AVAC invests in Alberta companies."

AVAC Ltd. is a private, not-for-profit company created in 1997 with support from Alberta and Ottawa. It invests in early-stage technology businesses. Radient borrowed a total of \$5.5 million from investors: AVAC lent \$2.95 million; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada lent \$1.15 million; and three existing shareholders invested the rest.

Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach, who attended the announcement Friday, beamed over the news. "Their decision to move to Alberta is proof we have sowed the right seeds and nurtured them," Stelmach said.

Radiant uses patented microwave energy technology developed by Environment Canada to extract valuable compounds from plants used in the manufacture of products like pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.

Put simply, microwaves are directed at plant material. Water molecules within the biomass absorb most of the energy so pressure builds up within the cells and the ingredients are driven into a surrounding solvent.

The 22-employee company expects to hire another 30 to 40 new workers in Edmonton over the next 18 months, Cox said. It's not known yet how many employees from British Columbia and Ontario will move to Edmonton.

Radiant is moving into a 14,000-square-foot facility on Roper Road in South Edmonton to house its headquarters and research and development, and it's looking for another building for its manufacturing process.

Radiant's new headquarters used to house Edmonton's ViRexx Medical Corp., which laid off all staff last year following the failure of its lead cancer drug in clinical trials.

It was a blow for the city's biotech sector, which last week saw drug giant Eli Lilly severing its relationship with local firm BioMS following the failure of its potential treatment for secondary progressive multiple sclerosis in advanced trials.

Cox acknowledged the sector's setbacks as he announced Radiant's relocation.

"I'm sure you'll agree that this is indeed good news for our sector that is somewhat beleaguered and has had some serious setbacks in the last months."

Radiant's move to Edmonton is a good way to start National Biotechnology Week, said Ryan Radke, president of BioAlberta, a biotech industry association.

"The last six to eight months, even 12 months, have been really tough," Radke said.

"The capital markets have closed down, as we all know, and in this sector--life sciences and biotechnology-- that's a critical component for companies who are trying to take their product forward.

"What we were really looking for was a good-news story and what we needed was a little revitalization within the sector, and Radiant is providing that with some new jobs to the area."

Cox says he's confident about Radiant's future.

"We're well-capitalized and second, we have sales. This company has revenues of \$2 million already, so it's not like we're a development-stage company burning shareholders' equity all the time."

And the technology is proven and isn't contingent on the success of clinical trials, he added.