



Small Business Spotlight: Canadian Electric Vehicles

Twenty-five years ago, long before electric vehicles became popular like they are today, a personal interest in converting gas-powered vehicles to electric led Randy Holmquist to launch Canadian Electric Vehicles (CEV) in Errington, a small Vancouver Island community.

In the early days of the company, Holmquist drew on his marine mechanics background to design conversion kits so gas and diesel-powered vehicles could go electric. From there his business grew and its offerings now include some of the following:

- Might-E Truck, an electric light utility truck that can be licensed as a Neighbourhood Electric Vehicle
- Might-E Tug, a machine that tows carts and equipment weighing up to 10,000 lbs.
- Three-tonne aircraft refueling trucks

A partnership with the local health authority 15 years ago spurred the creation of the Might-E Tug and subsequent electric vehicles. To this day, the Vancouver Island Health Authority continues to use the Might-E Tug to pull linen carts around in hospital basements, which has greatly decreased the number of work-related injuries.

A small company with five employees, CEV has grown into a successful global business with worldwide sales.

Government programs such as the Export Navigator pilot have been instrumental in its recent success. "Through Export Navigator, the connections we've been offered to start exploring the U.S. military market are extremely attractive," said Todd Maliteare, an engineer with CEV. "I'm hoping those contacts will help us understand how we can get onto purchasing contract lists so that U.S. government, municipal, and military divisions will have our products in front of them on their general purchasing contracts."

When it comes to exporting, Maliteare says it's something that other small businesses should consider if they want to grow. Depending on the product or industry, he recommends attending trade shows and taking advantage of networking opportunities to build relationships.

"You can meet so many people and gain so many contacts by attending those shows. It's very difficult to meet that many people that are associated to your potential market or your industry any other way," said Maliteare.

The future looks bright for CEV. In the next five years it hopes to fill out its product lines, double or triple its sales volume, and have an established dealer network across Canada and the United States, something that will be easier to achieve with the support of Export Navigator's export advisors.