

Harnessing the power of the sun, a dream dating back to antiquity, is now a reality so commonplace people tend to be blasé about it — even though the solar industry is still in its infancy, and specialists say we have not yet begun to tap its full potential.

Canadian company set to energize rural China

Major solar project

As China modernizes, and concern for environmental issues increases, the acquisition of the best and most advanced energy technologies becomes more important than ever before.

ATS, a solar pioneer

Enter a solar pioneer: Canada's Automation Tooling Systems Inc. (ATS). The Cambridge, Ontario company, with 3,200 employees at 25 facilities in three continents, is a leader in the design and production of turnkey automated manufacturing and test systems, used primarily by multinational companies to reduce costs and raise quality in a variety of industries, including automotive, information technology, consumer products and health care.

But ATS is also an acknowledged pioneer in the field of solar energy. Through its wholly owned subsidiaries, it is a world leader in multi-crystalline solar cells and modules, with a 7% share of the world market, making it the fourth-largest solar cell manufacturer in the world. It is the only Canadian company to own a world-class solar module producer and proprietary photovoltaic technologies.

An exciting pilot project

During the recent Team Canada trade mission to Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, ATS announced the start of an exciting pilot project that will provide solar electricity

to rural homes in Western China through the use of ATS's photovoltaic technology. The pilot project, being undertaken with government and private industry partners, expands on the success of an ongoing project on photovoltaic renewable energy that was started over a year ago.

The project is the culmination of efforts by ATS, the Canadian Government's Technology Early Action Measures Program, and Chinese partners Xining New Energy Development Company and China Renewable Energy Industry Association. The total value of the project is approximately \$2.9 million.



Tibet monks purchasing ATS/Photowatt panels and equipment for their community.

The solar project is one of the largest of its kind in China. "When completed," says Shawn Xiaohua Qu, ATS's Director, Photovoltaic Product Planning and Business Development, "this project may provide electricity to 15,000 or more rural family homes in the western provinces of China."

Photovoltaic technology is particularly useful in remote areas of developing countries, where the population is often scattered across large geographic areas and where electricity grids are virtually non-existent. "China, for instance, still has nearly 25% of its villages and

15 million families (70 million people) in rural areas without any access to electricity," notes Dr. Qu. In addition, there are many islands off the coast of China where the sole power source is often a diesel generator, which is noisy, polluting, expensive and unreliable since fuel has to be boated in from the mainland. ATS's photovoltaic solar panels provide a clean, renewable, low maintenance source of energy.

It is estimated that between the years 2000 and 2010, solar home systems for remote areas in China will present a \$1.4-billion market.

Team Canada adds credibility

Although ATS already had contacts in China and a project under way, being part of the Team Canada mission enabled the company to raise the project's profile, which, says Qu, "is very important when doing business in other parts of the world.

"When you go to another country on your own, your potential customers don't fully understand your status as a company, and that the Canadian government is supporting your efforts," he says. "As a Team Canada participant your credibility is immediately established, which lets you get right down to doing business."

And this is exactly what ATS is doing, adds Shawn Qu, who recently returned from a week-long visit to Beijing to make sure that the project start-up is running smoothly.

For more information on Automation Tooling Systems Inc., contact Dr. Shawn Xiaohua Qu, Director, Photovoltaic Product Planning and Business Development, tel.: (519) 650-2332, fax: (519) 650-8062, e-mail: squ@atsautomation.com Web site: www.atsautomation.com ✦

