

## The story behind the tower

When Susan Gorges, CEO of SpringBoard West Innovations first started working with entrepreneurs Lyle Weichel and Kim Korchinski, she was impressed with their long term vision for an alternative energy company encompassing wind, solar and energy conservation.

“They were already well down the track for the wind side of things but we quickly saw there were limited options for a near term revenue stream, so we encouraged them to focus on the small scale development side of their company where there are immediate applications for residential, commercial and municipal use,” says Gorges.



Solar capture research area southwest of the Terrace in Regina

Weichel’s and Korchinski’s company, WestSource Solutions, already had inroads with the residential and commercial use of wind and solar power, but needed to do a bit more research to advance municipal applications like ice free intersections and bridges. “The idea is to store and collect solar energy in heat sinks beneath the road surface during the summer and then release that stored energy in the winter to keep the surface ice free,” says Weichel. He is quick to point out that similar systems are already in use in Europe and Japan, and WestSource Solutions is adapting the technology for use in the much harsher conditions found in Canada.

With SpringBoard’s assistance, WestSource Solutions obtained funding for a heat sink research project from Communities of Tomorrow, another Innovation Place client. “We are pleased to be investing in local innovative companies, such as WestSource Solutions, that have significant potential in Saskatchewan,” says John Lee, President of Communities of Tomorrow. “Our support of this company is an example of the collaboration that is taking place between various service organizations, including SpringBoard West Innovations and Communities of Tomorrow, which has resulted in several complementary clients.”

WestSource Solutions is using the funding to examine the solar energy potential available in Regina and test different road surfaces for their ability to capture that energy. To do this, they set up a 10 metre tower southwest of the Terrace building on land provided by Innovation Place.

“This is exactly the type of interaction we work towards at our research parks,” says Ken Loepky, Vice President, Research Park Operations for Innovation Place. “We have two entrepreneurs recently graduated from the University working with one of our clients on their business plan, another of our clients on funding and we’re providing a small plot of land for the project itself.”

The tower is expected to be up until July. Real life road surface trials are expected to start this summer.