

# Islander returns home to build manufacturing plant and create opportunities on PEI

by Heidi Riley

MANUFACTURING DEVELOPMENT

**J**ason Aspin was born and raised in eastern PEI, and his father was General Manager with Northumberland Ferries for many years. "I learned a lot about general principles in engineering and physics from growing up on a farm. I got my interest in the marine industry from my father and from living on the Island."

Fifteen years ago, he left PEI for a career in engineering. With his business partner **Neale Kemp**, he established **Aspin Kemp & Associates (AKA)** in 1996. The company employs 50 people in Owen Sound Ontario, Dartmouth, Houston Texas, and Singapore. Now Jason is bringing some of that expertise back home to PEI.

"I've lived and worked on every continent except Australia and Antarctica, and after being away from PEI for so long, it's great to be back home," says Jason. "I hope that by settling here, this company will offer opportunities that were not available to me when I left. I grew up on PEI, and I know it's a good place to do business and to focus on green technology."

## Technology made on PEI

A year ago, AKA set up a small shop at the Stratford Business Park. From there, an eight-member engineering team designed and manufactured control panels for a hybrid tugboat that runs on a combination of diesel and electric motors. The panels were recently installed in a new tugboat that will operate at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach in California.

The technology developed by AKA allows the tugboat to use less fuel and reduce emissions. "There is such a groundswell of support from companies around the world for the technology we are working on," says Jason. "We have \$15 million worth of work outside the Hybrid system lined up for the next few years. With the addition of this technology, hopefully that will increase significantly."

## Building a bigger facility

Now that they have outgrown their office and manufacturing space, the company plans to build a new facility.

Construction will begin in spring, and they hope to move in by late summer. "This facility will be unique," says Jason. "We will build it using green technologies and we will utilize renewable resources for electrical and heating infrastructure."

The new building will house the design and production of the control panels. It will also serve as a training centre for the company's clients and employees.


## Employment opportunities

"We plan to hire 10 people to work at the new facility," says Jason. "As the business takes off, more hiring will follow in the future."

The company plans to hire

- electrical engineers
- software developers
- technicians
- AutoCAD drafts people
- administrative staff

"We're looking for people with basic knowledge, a great attitude, and a willingness to learn," says Jason. "We will be training them to use our systems."

 Job openings will be posted at [www.aka-group.net](http://www.aka-group.net)

Click on **About AKA** and then on **Careers**.

"The expansion of this company into PEI is a good fit with the existing shipbuilding sector here," says **Allan Campbell**, Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning. "The investment also supports the province's plan to attract talented young Islanders and their families back to PEI."



**Jason Aspin, right, Chief Executive Officer of Aspin Kemp & Associates, will build a new manufacturing facility in Stratford. At least 10 new jobs in engineering and technology will be created. Chunying Li, right, is an electrical engineer who joined AKA in 2006 and is now based on PEI.**

  For more information, call 519-376-2800 or visit [www.aka-group.net](http://www.aka-group.net) or [www.xeropointenergy.com](http://www.xeropointenergy.com)