

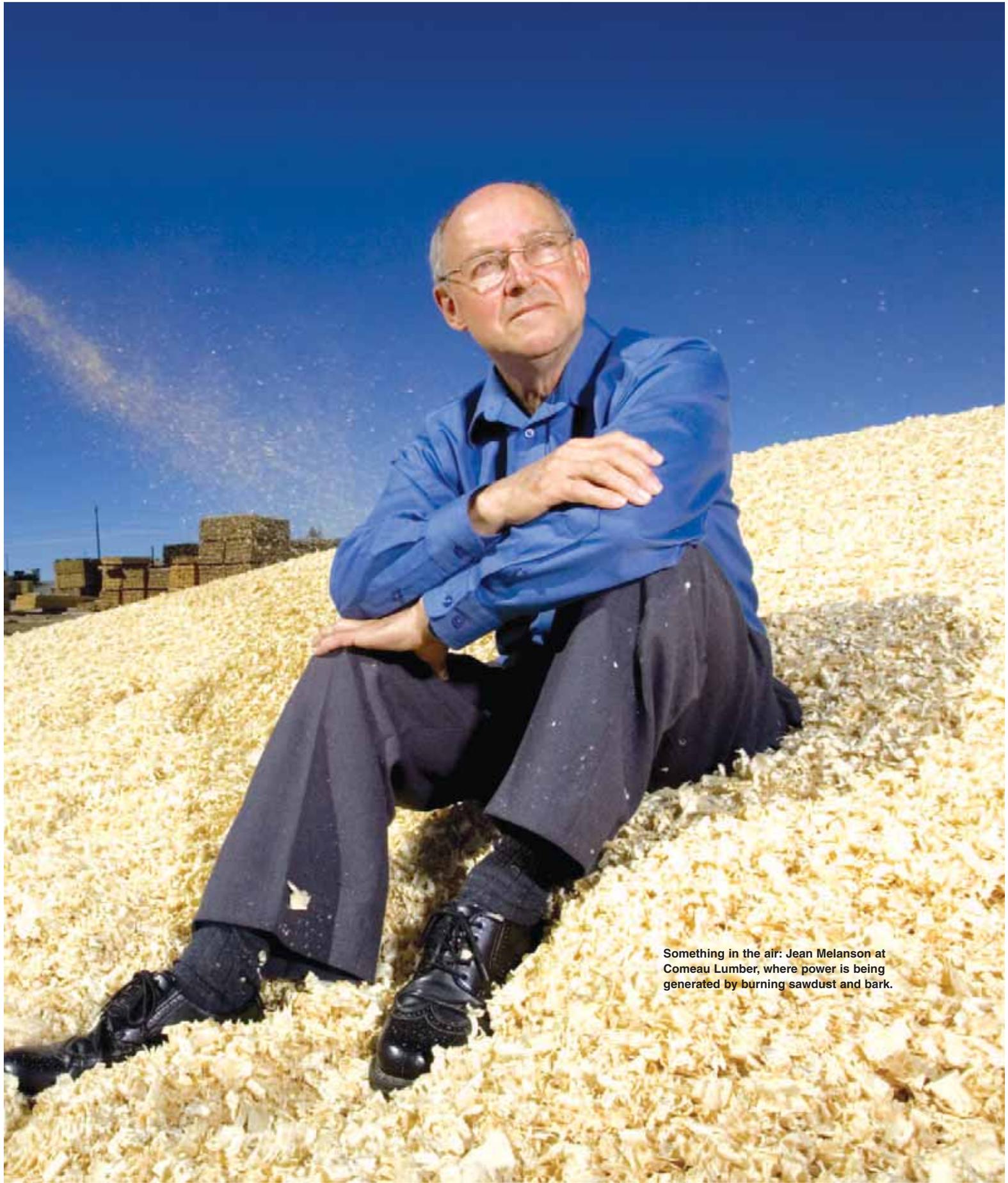
# Carbon COPY

*As the inevitable shadow of high-priced and carbon-emitting fossil fuels looms, the Municipality of Clare is sowing its own seeds of self-sufficiency, based on its kinship with a comparable community in Austria*

by JOE FITZGERALD

**I**n the spring of 2005, Martin Prauhart, an Austrian who summers in Nova Scotia, approached Jean Melanson to ask if he'd be interested in travelling to Prauhart's hometown of Gussing to see the remarkable achievements it had made in environmental sustainability. "I was skeptical at first," admits Melanson, the warden of the Municipality of Clare. "But Martin was enthusiastic, and after a few meetings it sounded like something we could do."





Something in the air: Jean Melanson at Comeau Lumber, where power is being generated by burning sawdust and bark.

SANDOR FIZLI

Gussing is a small farming community near the border of Hungary. Agriculture was its main industry for decades, but as a result of globalization it became economically depressed. Today Gussing produces all of its own heat and electricity, has cut its carbon emissions by more than 90%, has created new jobs, and has attracted global investors, scientists, and politicians to witness the town's self-sustainability model. It is also home to the European Centre of Renewable Energy.

"We're demographically similar to Gussing," says Melanson. "I became convinced that we should explore the possibility of doing here [in Clare] what they had done there, which was basically to become more self-sufficient in renewable energy and to produce our own energy through renewable resources."

To get a good cross-section of his community, Melanson proposed the idea to representatives at Université Sainte-Anne and local businesspeople, then contacted the South West Shore Development Authority ([www.swsda.com](http://www.swsda.com)), which began organizing what became

Energy and have also explored the use of solar cells, solar panels, and biodiesel.

With the advancements in renewable energy practices, a learning program called a Solarteur school, which is run through the local high school as a trade; it has been established throughout Europe. The school teaches renewable energy practices and technical skills such as how to install heat pumps, solar cells, and solar panels. One of the founders of the Solarteur schools is a resident of Gussing.

"It was quite an eye-opener for us," says Melanson. "Each of our local businesses had its own particular interest. For example, Comeau Sea Foods had a lot of excess fish oil and thought it could convert this into biodiesel and run some of its generators. Spectacle Lake Pork Farm was interested in the methane it could capture from its manure, and for many years Comeau Lumber has been producing power by burning sawdust and bark. It can now sell the excess electricity it generates back to Nova Scotia Power. A.F. Theriault & Son is a local pri-



"I became convinced that we should explore the possibility of becoming more self-sufficient in renewable energy" — Jean Melanson, warden, Municipality of Clare

an exploratory mission to Gussing. The response was enthusiastic, and in June of 2005 a delegation of 19 businesses, including the Spectacle Lake group of companies, ADI Horner Engineering, Nova Scotia Business Inc. ([www.novascotiabusiness.com](http://www.novascotiabusiness.com)), the Municipality of Clare, and representatives from the Departments of Energy and Natural Resources and Université Sainte-Anne, travelled to Austria for 10 days. The delegates attended workshops and studied the various models Gussing was using to produce energy.

In the early 1990s, Gussing began its own renewable-energy project, when town officials decided to stop paying for expensive fossil fuels. They began by building a district heating system fuelled by locally available biomass in the form of trees. As it became more successful, they expanded the system and incorporated technology to produce electricity and heat at the same time, through a process called co-generation. Because of this leadership in community-based renewable energy, they have become home to the European Centre for Renewable

vately owned shipyard, and [its members] are now on our steering committee."

Université Sainte-Anne explored the possibility of implementing a certified Solarteur school; it is a future consideration for the university, which is venturing into using wood chips to co-generate heat and electricity. "This would be a project to address our energy needs," says Sebastien Dol, a communications agent with Université Sainte-Anne. "It could be used as a demonstration project of community heating, with neighbouring houses and businesses hooked up on the same system."

Although opportunities abound, Clare and Gussing comparisons should be kept in context. "We still have relatively cheap sources of energy here," says Jason Hollett, a Department of Energy program administration officer and the organizer of the exploratory mission, "whereas the cost of [Gussing's] energy is two, three, four times as much as ours. They have economic as well as environmental drivers, and right now we're working on environmental drivers. The economics will catch up eventually."

# Without the dedication of the municipality, the initiative wouldn't be moving forward



Clare's first step was to design a community master plan, which was completed last winter. "Basically, you map out your community and do an inventory of where your energy is used and where it comes from," says Hollett. "You know how many kilowatt hours are used, you know what greenhouse gases are produced from what sources. With that snapshot of the community, you do an analysis of what the opportunities are to reduce that energy use and produce your own energy from renewable resources, whether it's wind, biomass, or solar. The next step is to develop a plan to realize those opportunities. That's where Clare is today; it has completed those three steps."

Without the dedication of the municipality, the initiative wouldn't be moving forward; this dedication has also brought other partners on board. The first three project milestones were funded through the federal, provincial,

and municipal governments and by an organization called the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, or the FCM. "The municipality joined a program called Partners for Climate Protection, and it lays out five milestones," says Hollett. "Clare has done the first three. The fourth is implementing the plan, and the fifth is monitoring it."

Clare spends \$40 million each year on energy costs; \$28 million of that is from residential use, including heating, electricity, and transportation. The remaining \$12 million is being spent on commercial energy use. Clare is now ready to begin implementing plans to reduce its environmental footprint and become self-sufficient in renewable energy. "Clare has taken a leadership position on using renewable energy," says Hollett. "They took a big risk and invested their own money to travel to Austria. They are implementing great ideas and viable concepts. The project is moving forward." ■

## Inspired Beginnings



Frank Sobey, son of John William, Pictou County, 1907

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### Pictou County



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