

technology (MCC) drug for bladder cancer is currently nearing completion of the final phase of human trials with very promising results.

The new treatment demonstrated two anti-cancer actions — an immune response, and a programmed process of death for cells called apoptosis.

While he cannot speak specifically about the results of the studies until they are officially released later this month, McRae — noting results from previous human trials — said the results “speak for themselves.

“The more data we get, the more we realize how important the product is,” he said, noting that in previous studies there have been no side effects in patients using the treatment, while in the majority of cases there has been a dramatic decrease — even elimination — of cancer in the body.

“To have a cancer treatment that is highly effective and safe in this day and age of chemotherapy... radiation therapy and even surgery sometimes, we’re realizing how important this technology is.”

If the results continue to be as promising, and the product is approved to go into production by both Health Canada and the United States Food and Drug Administration within the next few years, Bioniche’s revenues could increase 10-fold, he said.

In addition, the technology — that Bioniche holds exclusive patents for — is currently being used as a model for the company to develop potential treatments for other forms of

the disease, including prostate and lung cancer.

The progression of research, development and marketing teams within the company has built “a tremendous skill-set” within Bioniche, McRae added.

“When you’re introducing products that are making revenue and meeting international standards, it means your people have become highly-qualified.”

Currently the company has more than 200 employees throughout various plants and offices around the world — including more than 70 employees in Belleville. But, it is expected to grow substantially over the next five years, McRae said.

When the company decided to relocate to Belleville from London, Ontario in the late 1990s, McRae admitted there was a concern that “we may have trouble hiring qualified people.”

However, he took into consideration the lower cost of housing (as compared to Toronto and Montreal), and the quality of life in the Quinte area. McRae said, “there is a large population of qualified people in the pharmaceutical industry that would give their teeth to work in a place like Belleville.

“We have to be competitive with salaries (offered by companies) in Toronto and Montreal... but when potential employees look at what they can get in terms of housing, quality of life and even commuting distances, we’ve had no trouble hiring people.”

In terms of meeting future labour needs, McRae has been in discussion with officials with Loyalist College to potentially develop innovative programs in the college that would involve placements within Bioniche.

Some of the projects and partnerships include having highly-trained Bioniche personnel teach specialized classes within the science wing of the college, he added.

“Having the ability to hire people at a technician level locally — which is entry level to this industry — means you can bring people into this type of environment where the jobs pay quite well, and there is tremendous potential. It’s an industry that is very secure — people will always get sick, animals will always get sick — (and) there is a demand for technologies, so we will have a constant need to grow our staffing levels.

“So, Loyalist College is a very important component to our success. We can help Loyalist train the students and they can help us in supplying our labour needs

as we move forward.”

Employees are the foundation of the company, he maintained, and have the “same status as shareholders in the company. The employee invests his career, while the shareholder invests money... but they share the same goal.”

There is, however, more to Bioniche than simply increasing the return for investors, McRae said.

“What are we here for? We’re here for two things: we’re here to provide a stable return for our stakeholders and employees. And, we want to save lives.

“Either by protecting humans from the E. coli virus by developing a vaccination for cattle or by protecting humans from cancer by being able to treat the disease without side effects, our success means people are living a high quality of life.

“It’s a lot of responsibility and a pretty high driving cause for our company — and our employees take that responsibility very seriously.”