

The "number one objective" at Kimberly Clark is to make quality pulp-

By Wendy Parker
Special to the News

Kimberly-Clark's "number one objective" at its Terrace Bay mill is to make a quality pulp that meets the standards the customer expects, says Jack Lavallet, president of K-C of Canada and general manager of the Terrace Bay mill.

"It's meeting the standards that the customer has to have, where he can open a boxcar of our pulp and never glance at it to wonder whether it really is what it says it is.

"It's going to be exactly what he wants, because that's what we shipped him."

The company has achieved that objective about 75 per cent of the time "and that's not a small thing to say" because the Terrace Bay mill couldn't have hit that mark in the past, he said.

"It just made something and you tried to sell it."

Financial loss

After a year of intense effort

trying to pull the Terrace Bay facility out of a quagmire of financial losses, the company is confident it has stabilized its market and its customers.

"We are very, very proud," Lavallet said. "In July, we made more high-quality hardwood pulp than ever before. And that's good. We're proud of that."

To make a quality pulp, several things have to happen, Lavallet said.

"First you have to have the dedication of the people who make it, because it's hard and expensive to do.

"You have to have a mill that runs. I don't know of very many industrial-process things that can make a quality product without running...you've got to get the system up and the wheels moving. And we've been able to do that. The place is running a lot better."

Competition curious

Kimberly-Clark has also made some changes that Lavallet

declined to detail "because some of our competition would love to know some of the things we've done."

These changes are not necessarily new to the business and pulp mills are not secretive places, he said, "But we do a few things here that are a little bit different than other people.

"Consequently, we are able to make a product that is pretty damn good for this place."

The second of the company's two primary business strategies is to operate the facility at a profit, he said.

The need is a basic one. The company's parent, Kimberly-Clark Corporation of Neenah, Wisconsin, told Terrace Bay it would close the mill unless fortunes turned around by the end of the year.

The company implemented a three-point survival plan aimed at getting its mill operating efficiently, securing a new environmental control order and bringing its wood costs into line.

It got the control order earlier this year, Lavallet said, but it still has to do all the work to meet the objectives.

It now has experts from around the world working on the problem of toxicity in the mill's effluent "and that's one of the top 10 objectives of this entire corporation- to find the solution of the toxicity problem at a pulp mill."

Terrace Bay is expending "a tremendous amount of effort" on

finding solutions to the toxicity problem, he said, "for lots of reasons, including the fact that we made the press a lot and people expect us to do something; we've committed to do something; and our control order gets reviewed again pretty quickly."

The environmental effort will also tie up much of Kimberly-Clark's capital spending for the next few years, Lavallet said.

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The Kimberly-Clark pulp mill in Terrace Bay, Ontario.

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