

TECHNOLOGY/POLITICS

# Five N.L. firms get federal funding

By DAVE BARTLETT  
THE TELEGRAM

**M**aurice Tuff of Blue Line Innovations Inc. created a device which tells people how much electricity they burn per hour in dollars and cents.

It helps people and companies manage their power use.

But when he started the company and was looking for investors, most people weren't interested.

Then he brought the prototype, which he describes as an "ugly black box," to the National Research Council (NRC) in St. John's, which eventually led to funding through its industrial research assistance program (IRAP).

"Now you can buy that product, branded under Black and Decker at Canadian Tire," he said Tuesday morning.

"None of it would have been possible without NRC-IRAP."

Tuff made the comment during a federal funding announcement. His company was one of five to receive money from the program.

It got \$47,880 Tuesday to help develop an international version of the device.

Federal Industry Minister Tony Clement made the announcement, which funnelled more than \$1.2 million from Ottawa to the local businesses.

"We support the innovation and commercialization of ideas quite simply because this is the process that creates jobs. It improves the quality of life of Canadians and it strengthens our economy for future generations," Clement said as he announced the funds and presented each company with a large certificate recognizing each as a leader in innovation in Canada.

A good chunk of the money went to two of the companies.

NavSim Technology Inc. received \$491,008 to develop its new version of an electronic navigation system used on land and at sea.

Piotr Waclawek said his company



Maurice Tuff's company Blue Line Innovations Inc. was one of five local companies which received a total of \$1.2 million from the National Research Council's industrial research assistance program Tuesday in St. John's. — Photo by Dave Bartlett/The Telegram

has almost 100 per cent of the professional Canadian market for electronic navigation devices, has a solid footing in the U.S. and is growing fast in Europe.

"With the financial support, we are building right now the third generation of our product," he said.

Waclawek said his company is two to four years ahead of its competitors and credited NRC for making it a leader in the field.

Camouflage Software Inc. also got a large share of the money, \$460,000, to help develop data-masking software.

Kevin Fleming of Camouflage said data masking "allows organizations to do things with data, without compromising the privacy of the individual."

Fleming said the investment allows his company to compete with larger ones.

Avalon Microelectronics Inc. got \$211,751 to develop computer soft-

ware to expand and enhance user performance.

Wally Haas said he got the idea for his company in his basement three years ago.

"I needed to partner with someone like NRC, which would allow us to develop technology that would allow us to compete in a worldwide market," he said.

Haas said NRC's original investment of \$180,000 led to cumulative sales of more than \$4 million and the company has gone from one to more than 20 employees.

Verafin Inc. was the final company to get money, \$30,000.

It makes software for banks to help prevent fraud and money laundering.

Jamie King of Verafin said 400 financial institutions use its software.

He said help from the NRC-IRAP has "been the cornerstone of Verafin's growth."

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