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High-tech industry ideal for region

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We keep hearing that if Niagara is to continue to thrive in this new millennium, new, high-tech and innovative industries are the way to go. The region's days as a smokestack area of older, dirtier industries appear forever gone.

Those jobs, at least the ones that still remain, appear inevitably destined to end up in other countries with lower wages and -- in many cases -- more lax environmental laws. From Welland to Niagara Falls to St. Catharines, old factories that once employed hundreds or thousands for generations are either mothballed or suffering a death of a thousand cuts.



A local Niagara company, Tersano in St. Catharines, is a perfect example of how innovation, good timing and old-fashioned entrepreneurship can carve out a good niche in the marketplace. Tersano produces the new Lotus Sanitizing System, in which the ozone sanitizing technology used at multimillion-dollar water treatment plants has been miniaturized to fit on your kitchen counter.

The technology, hardly bigger than a toaster oven, is able to quickly sanitize water, kitchen counters, fruits, vegetables, seafood and meats, without the need for harsh chemicals such as chlorine bleach. The non-toxic technology caught the attention of Time magazine, which gave it the title of one of the top inventions of the year. The systems are now available at local Canadian Tire stores.

Like many success stories, the timing was right for Tersano. In September, hundreds of people became sick and several died in the U.S., when spinach contaminated from deadly E. coli bacteria -- likely from cattle manure -- got into the food supply. Then within weeks, there was another food scare: two people in Toronto became paralyzed after they drank carrot juice contaminated with the botulism toxin.

Suddenly, all that talk about how we need to eat more fruit and vegetables and get back to healthy nutritional basics had a hollow sound to it. The availability of the new Tersano sanitizing system will hopefully allow us to eat our salads and seafood safe in the knowledge all those nasty microorganisms out there have been annihilated.

Tersano may be small by traditional manufacturing standards in Niagara: it only has 13 employees right now. But economic development gurus have been telling us for years that we can no longer rely on our traditional manufacturing base.

Tersano may be small, but they represent the future of Niagara's manufacturing sector.