



Waterloo students compete to build eco-friendly, fuel efficient vehicle

Maurice Cacho

Jun 2, 2004

METROLAND WHEELS

A group of Waterloo students will be the only Canadians to compete this fall in a new North American competition that will use General Motors' global vehicle development process to develop a feasible, yet eco-friendly engine for the Chevrolet Equinox SUV.

The Waterloo team will receive support from General Motors Canada, Hydrogenics Corporation and Natural Resources Canada. Sixteen other American teams will also compete for cash prizes.

For the three-year competition, named Challenge X, the Waterloo team has chosen to use hydrogen fuel cell technology to power their SUV.

"We are thrilled to be the only Canadian university team chosen to participate in Challenge X," said David Johnston, president, University of Waterloo. "It broadens (the students') perspective by providing all the dimensions of a commercial project including finance, modeling, design, manufacturing prototype and competition," Johnston added.

Each team will receive a Canadian-built Chevrolet Equinox at the end of the first year of the program. Students will then be able to use their models and simulations to make an engine to be installed in the Equinox in the second year. In the last two years, students will work to refine and improve their fuel-efficient vehicles.

Pierre Rivard, president and CEO of Mississauga-based Hydrogenics likes Waterloo's decision to use hydrogen technology.

"Competitions like Challenge X will help to demonstrate how this kind of clean energy technology can be all about having more, instead of making do with less," said Rivard.

At the end of the competition, a team of judges made up of industry, government and academic specialists will evaluate the competitors based on a wide range of criteria, including acceleration, greenhouse gas impact, off-road performance, towing capacity and consumer acceptability.

Should other Canadian universities expect another chance to compete in this competition? Although nothing is definite, Susan Garavaglia, manager of GM's advanced technology communications is enthusiastic about the future of Challenge X. "It is our hope that it would be an on-going competition, and it would continue after three years." This ultimately depends on the success of the first competition.