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## Businesses in transition

by Gayle Wilson



GAYLE WILSON PHOTO

Neck Tronics founder Bill Smith (far left) and his team of engineers and technicians: Lee Babin, Jonathan Kaye, Hady Sarhan and Dyn'se Burton.

### Neck Tronics flexes its muscle

The Bridgewater-based start-up Neck Tronics Inc. is strengthening its position as the developer of a groundbreaking device for the assessment and treatment of neck injuries.

Since it was established two years ago by Bridgewater chiropractor Bill Smith and engineer Peter Haase, Neck Tronics has received more than \$250,000 in government funding and is on track to raise a further \$550,000 in equity. The company, which Smith now solely owns, set up shop in offices on King Street in January and has hired four full-time engineers.

It launched its website last week and expects to take on more staff in the coming months.

After Smith and Haase presented the concept to the National Research Council (NRC) two years ago, the government institution gave the pair \$50,000 to help offset engineering costs related to development.

"Now they're really impressed with what we're doing," said Smith, noting that on February 24 the NRC awarded the company a further \$202,000. In order to access those funds Neck Tronics is required to contribute funds to the device's development as well.

According to Smith, the company needs about \$1.2 million to get its product to commercialization. So it's selling 55 shares at \$10,000. "And we're doing pretty good so far," said Smith.

"It was a long haul to get us to this January, but now the company is in a much better position," he said.

The Neck Tronics' engineering team is fine-tuning its prototype, the design for which Smith has patented virtually around the world. Working with independent Nova Scotia Community College researchers, the team will be testing the unit for safety and functionality to ensure it complies with guidelines. The company expects to go into commercial production in the middle of next year.

The intention is to manufacture the product in Bridgewater, but the company is looking at distribution agents to help with international markets.

"At this point it's a bit of an arduous undertaking to take a small company like this and invest \$25 million to get into multiple markets, especially in the U.S. and Europe. If we can partner with a larger firm for the marketing and distribution, but we still maintain the production here, it's the best of both worlds," said Smith.

Looking to the future, Smith would like to see the operation develop as an "intellectual hub."

"We have a gifted group of individuals sitting at this table here. So we're going to try to utilize that to maybe even build more technology. Our patent covers us not only for the neck but for every body part."