Canadian Company Plans Steel Plant In Great Falls

The Associated Press

GREAT FALLS, Mont. (AP) — A Canadian company has announced plans to build a structural steel manufacturing plant in north-central Montana to make oil production modules for companies working in the oil sands of Alberta.

Quebec-based ADF Group Inc. said it is buying 100 acres of land near Great Falls to build a 100,000-square-foot facility. It expects to hire 200 workers in the coming year, the Great Falls Tribune (http://bit.ly/PRvQgM) reported Monday.

"We offer pay up to $20 an hour, as well as benefits and profit sharing," said Jean Paschini, CEO and board chairman for ADF Group. "We are dedicated to becoming a good member of the Great Falls community. We are excited to be there."

Paschini said the company eventually plans to hire as many as 300 people to work inside the manufacturing facility, and 800 people in the yard to do assembly work as it markets steel in North Dakota, South Dakota and Idaho.

ADF Group fabricates complex steel structures for projects such as museums, sports arenas, bridges, high-rises and airports. The company provided steel for the World Trade Center Freedom Tower project under construction in New York, the Tribune reported.

In Great Falls, the first phase of operations will involve building modules for oil sands work in Canada. Some of the products will move in standard semi tractor-trailer loads, others will be large enough to require special permits from the Montana Department of Transportation.

The transportation route to Canada runs northeast from the plant on U.S. Highway 87 to Fort Benton, then north on Highway 223 to Chester. The loads will travel west on U.S. Highway 2 about 20 miles to the Galata turnoff then on back roads to Oilmont and to the Canadian border along an Interstate 15 frontage road.

The Great Falls Development Authority committed $2.5 million in financing for the project and is working to secure training grants from the Department of Commerce and financing with the Montana Board of Investment. It is also working with Great Falls College Montana State University to create a curriculum to prepare people for welding and other skilled trade jobs at the ADF plant.

"We really feel that with this state-of-the-art facility being built here by a company with a lot of clout in this field, other companies will look at building similar facilities here," said Jeremiah Johnson, vice president of marketing for the Great Falls Development Authority.

Texas-based Bay Ltd. has a similar fabrication facility in Billings. In addition to building equipment for oil sands projects in Alberta, it is seeking work related to the Bakken oil boom.

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