

New niches for textile industry

TECHNICAL SIDES

Showcased
in exposition

MIKE KING
THE GAZETTE

The continuing development of so-called technical textiles for niche markets is helping the struggling Canadian textile industry to reposition itself globally, and some of those advances were showcased and launched in Old Montreal this week.

A disposable hydrating washcloth that serves as an alternative to bathtubs and showers as well as a revolutionary panty with special lining that keeps women dry while protecting clothing from stains were among the innovations introduced at the two-day Expo Hightex 2009.

Guy Drouin, who headed the organizing committee of this year's industry exposition that ended yesterday, said the remaining players are focusing specifically on niche markets in Asia and Europe.

In spite of the still-strong loonie, Drouin noted: "The North American market is also opening up to us."

Aside from the usual applications for technical textiles, like the more visible protective clothing and equipment, Drouin said there's growing attention being paid to the construction, medical and transportation sectors — all three of which were featured



JOHN KENNEY THE GAZETTE

Anne-Marie Gill (left) and Caroline Boulé of the Montreal police department examine materials for uniforms at a booth manned by Benjamin Brook of Bon-Mar Safety Division at the Expo Hightex at Bonsecours Market on Wednesday.

for the first time in addition to the usual exhibits by Quebec companies.

Texel of St. Elzéar-de-Beauce, a leader in the manufacturing of specialized non-woven materials, developed the Hydrabath washcloth that reduces the use of conventional wipes and towels requiring handling, cleaning and eventual disposal.

"There is no longer a need for the cloth towels, water basins and hydrating lotions that are generally used to bathe patients, and there is no risk of contamination associated with traditional baths,"

explained Drouin, who is president of Texel.

Protec-Style Lingerie Inc. of St. Jean sur Richelieu married technical textiles with fine lingerie to come up with its Marilyn panty, named in honour of the famous photo of actress Marilyn Monroe's white panties being exposed as she stood over a subway grate.

The padding fabric that is in contact with the skin consists of absorbent (10 times more than its weight, the equivalent of a sanitary napkin or tampon) and antimicrobial and polyester mi-

crofibres that keep the body dry while reducing odours.

Nearly 20 purchasing executives from North America, Europe and Asia were among the hundreds of business and research leaders who attended Expo Hightex.

It is organized by the St. Hyacinthe-based, non-profit organization CTT Group (Centre des technologies textiles et géosynthétiques).

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