

Port vila lithium-ion batteries

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Based on earlier reports, the plant is to be a joint-venture with Honda Canada as part of its EV battery supply chain -- although Honda wasn't present, or even mentioned, at the official announcement

The official announcement came Tuesday in the Niagara Region with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, along with other federal and provincial government officials, as well as members from Asahi Kasei in attendance.

Asahi Kasei had already unveiled its plans to construct the plant in Ontario on April 25 -- the same day Honda Canada announced its \$15-billion plan to start EV assembly and battery manufacturing at new facilities in Alliston, Ont., in 2028.

Both companies' announcements that day also indicated that they intend to be joint-venture partners in the separator plant -- and the assumption is that Honda Canada's battery plant will be a primary customer for its output.

Kashiro Kudo, president and representative director of Asahi Kasei, was asked at the press conference who the plant's customers would be. His reply (through a translator) only referred to "customers in Canada and also in the United States," with the possibility of exporting to Europe as well if there's a demand.

A Honda spokesperson responded stating, "Honda is evaluating the scope of its recent \$15 billion investment to build a comprehensive EV value chain in Canada, and is completing negotiations with its joint-venture partners, including Asahi Kasei Corporation. This work is expected to be finalized during the next six months and more details will be shared at that time."

Asahi Kasei's new plant in Port Colborne is operating under the name Asahi Kasei Battery Separator Canada. It will manufacture its proprietary "Hipore" battery separators, which are an essential component of the lithium-ion EV batteries.

The separator enhances battery sustainability and durability by preventing direct contact between the anode and cathode. This prevents short circuits while enabling lithium ions to pass back and forth during battery charging and discharging.

"But eventually we would like to procure the materials from North America," he added. "In order to do so, we are also thinking of transferring the technology to suppliers of those materials."

"As we progress in our investigation, little by little we have learned that there is a huge enthusiasm



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coming from the federal government, provincial government and the local municipal government and also we have found that there are plenty of great quality human resources available here.”

But clearly, if the plant will ultimately be a joint venture with Honda supplying its battery plant in Alliston, locating it somewhere in the region also seems essential. (News reports suggest Port Colborne beat out Winnipeg for the location of the plant.)

“We have extraordinary natural resources, we have clean energy and we take climate action seriously. We have stable democratic institutions and strong communities and all those things are what the international community investors look for when they come. But the number one thing that is our competitive advantage as a country is Canadian workers themselves,” said Trudeau.

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