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## Innovator: Biorem's greener way to clean

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Mention odour eaters and most people think of sweaty feet, but for Biorem Inc., a biotechnology firm based in Guelph, Ont., the subject is far more serious. The clean-tech company has spent 17 years developing and marketing a biological filter (biofilter) that uses micro-organisms to remove odours and hazardous pollutants from air and waste water. And now that Biorem's research has resulted in a cheaper biofilter, and sales to factories and municipal facilities are on the rise, the company is finally moving into the black.

Biorem, which is listed on the TSX Venture Exchange, has installed about 550 of its systems worldwide, the majority in municipal waste-water plants and sewage facilities. Yet this is only a tiny part of the global market in filters for municipal plants, which is estimated at more than \$1 billion per year. Over half of this market is served by scrubbers that use toxic chemicals. In contrast, Biorem's filters contain materials that foster the growth of micro-organisms that feed on odour-generating compounds. The capital costs are higher, but they don't require expensive chemicals. "They're much cheaper to maintain," says one analyst. "The bugs work for free."

After a long struggle for profitability, Biorem appears to have finally turned the corner, with a modest profit of \$144,000 in the third quarter of 2008, compared with a loss of \$1.7 million a year earlier. CEO Peter Bruijns attributes the shift to Biorem's newly refined technology. "Our new biofilters are one-third of the size and 1/10th of the cost," he says.

While Biorem isn't the only company trying to cash in on the concept of biofiltration, Bruijns is betting that with his company's \$3 million in debt financing from Wellington Financial and a new office in China, it is well set up to crack the industrial air-pollution market, a \$6-billion industry that, increasingly, is being pushed towards clean-tech solutions by new legislation.

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