

# Global Power Technologies CEO's Company Purchase Was A Return To Her Love Of Manufacturing

Focus is on lower emissions, higher efficiency, and greater functionality

By [Cathryn Atkinson](#)

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Laura Kennedy

When **Laura Kennedy** became co-owner and CEO of off-grid generator manufacturer **Global Power Technologies** (GPT) in 2019, the company was already long established, with a storied history in its founding during **NASA's** Apollo space program.

In 1975, NASA turned to **3M** to develop thermoelectric technology to provide reliable uninterrupted power generation on the moon. When Apollo's lunar ambitions waned, the technology was purchased by Albertan entrepreneurs, who sought to manufacture and develop off-grid thermoelectric generators (TEGs) here on earth.

Popular with companies needing remote energy sources, today 35,000 TEGs are deployed in more than 55 countries, powering energy sector critical systems for offshore platforms, pipelines, and wellheads, among other things. TEGs provide reliable power up to 500W per unit via a solid-state design [no moving parts].

The original TEGs ran on natural gas and propane, but GPT has since expanded this to hybrid solar-compatible thermal generators (H-TEGs). As well, the TEG's heat recovery system (HRS) improves site efficiency by using TEG-generated heat to regulate the temperature of buildings.

Along with TEGs, GPT builds high-powered MX Primegen Power Generators, and EZ Air Instrument Air Systems emissions reduction.

About 25 per cent of GPT's revenues come from Canada, with the U.S., Latin America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia making up the balance. Well over half of its business comes from the gas industry; a smaller portion from oil.

Clients include **Suncor Energy Inc.**, **Black Swan Energy**, and hundreds of other upstream and midstream operators, “big international top-tier oil and gas companies and pipelines.”

Some have worked with GPT for decades.

Kennedy said GPT changed hands several times before she and her co-owner partner and CFO **Collin Newman** bought it. The company and its 100 staff are based in Calgary and Bassano, Alberta.

“One of the reasons we bought it was that we love the company, we love the technology. We felt that it had a great reputation worldwide for bringing reliable power to the energy industry, but we also felt there was a really good opportunity to pivot our company to also serve the energy transition,” Kennedy said in an interview with *DOB Energy*.

Kennedy said they focus on lower emissions, higher efficiency, and greater functionality.

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GPT is not moving away from using natural gas at this point, and Kennedy supports using it to operate TEGs.

“I think it's a cleaner solution to help us move towards to net zero overall by 2050, but I think there's a lot of really small steps towards those 2030 goals that we need to be taking now. I don't think going completely away from natural gas is realistic yet, but I say yet with an emphasis,” Kennedy said.

## ***A love of factories and manufacturing***

Kennedy says she has loved being in factories since she graduated with her bachelor of applied science in mechanical engineering from the **University of Waterloo**. She went on to **MIT** for an MSc in mechanical engineering and a master of science of management from **MIT Sloan**.

“The development of products, the manufacturing of products, the integration of tradespeople into your business, that relationship of all the different people that it takes for a product to work, and to service that product, and support that product, I just love that environment,” she said.

“Even scheduling to me is fascinating, right? With a product that has 200 parts, how do you make sure that you have that inventory and the quality, and the work instructions, to make sure that they all go together properly?”

Her fascination and passion for the process led her to manufacturing with **Hewlett Packard** and eventually to Calgary, and from there to oil and gas.

“I had that pressure to keep up with the Joneses. It felt like, ‘well, manufacturing is not it here, it's got to be oil and gas because [it's] Calgary,’ of course, anyone and everyone you talk to back in that era was oil and gas,” she said.

Kennedy learned about energy development, particularly while in an international development role with **Talisman Energy**, which was later acquired by **Repsol**.

“But after a number of years, I really missed manufacturing. I missed seeing products; I missed coming up with technical ideas to solve challenges in the industry, and I wanted to be on the doing and building side, instead of the operating and delivering side of the energy industry,” Kennedy said.

She came to GPT while it was still a publicly traded company but had long wanted to own one.

“I think to be able to have the strategic vision of what you want the company to be, and what you want the company to offer to industry, that's been a lot of fun,” Kennedy said.

“We've got a lot of positive support in the company to change it and to do new things.

“Being an international supplier is also a huge passion of mine. I love seeing how we can support African companies, for example, to be able to solve their energy industry challenges, as much as the Middle East, or Canada, or Latin America, right?

“It's really interesting what makes each of those companies... What their priorities are and how we can help each of them.”

### ***Carrots and sticks and the low carbon shift***

Consciously developing the products that help companies in their quests for zero emissions since 2019, Kennedy says the shift in mentality has been moving for “quite some time.” She says the change can be seen in buying patterns.

“You really see a difference in regional buying patterns now that maybe long ago you wouldn't have seen,” she said.

“Oil and gas, I think, would have operated fairly similarly around the world for a period of time and best practices were shared best practices, whereas now I think there's quite a divergence in how progressive companies are, and what's driving their buying behaviors, depending on where they are in that energy transition movement.”

She's fascinated by the ESG targets of corporations and how they drive many first-mover activities for emissions reductions.

“Often it's your largest oil and gas producers that are leading the way in emissions reduction, and that comes from their own corporate values around their ESG targets,” Kennedy said.

“I would say the next biggest driver in purchasing patterns are... I'm going to call them ‘carrots and sticks’: if there's fines for not complying to emissions, if there's credits for adhering to or taking part in certain activities, that certainly drives a lot of behavior.

“The third I would say would be regulatory changes, but if there's nothing behind the regulatory changes either in fines, penalties, taxes, or credits and the positive side, and if the companies don't have a strong ESG value set, the regulations alone are slow to be adhered to unless there's a pain to not adhering to them.

“They are companies who maybe can't afford or don't as easily justify the spend on the emissions reductions activities.”

## ***Canada is ahead of the game***

Kennedy says she is very appreciative of Canadian clients, saying some are especially forward thinking in emissions reduction.

“They're willing to try new solutions and we're really grateful that when they try them, they find that actually they are reliable, they are enabling us to have an affordable solution,” she said.

“They become repeat clients, and we see that loyalty of purchasing coming from our Canadian base, which is often our first mover or first environment.

“We're able to leverage some of our key clients in Canada into their U.S. operations, or into similarly sized companies either in the U.S. or around the world.”

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