

CORPORATE CANADA IN PROFILE: ALL THE DATA THAT REALLY COUNTS
> IS STIMULUS WORTH THE PRICE? > TRAILBLAZING CANADIAN FIRMS

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CANADA'S LARGEST CORPORATIONS

With smoking on the wane and with strong public opposition, the tobacco industry appears doomed. Medicago says 'maybe not'



Company: Medicago Inc.
Headquarters: Quebec City
Key Innovation: Using tobacco plants to make vaccines

TOBACCO COMPANIES HAVE often sought more healthful applications for the carcinogenic plant in which they've invested so much. So what could be better than using tobacco to produce medicine that could save the world from a pandemic? Enter Medicago, a biotech company that is testing a method for cultivating a key protein for influenza vaccines — expected to become a \$45-billion global market by 2015 — using tobacco leaves. Not only is using tobacco cheaper than traditional methods, but faster, a critical factor in preventing an outbreak from turning into a pandemic. While other materials, such as eggs, take months to generate the key protein, tobacco does it in four weeks. Last year, Medicago snared a \$16-million investment from Philip Morris International to move its R&D into fast gear. Medicago plans to start human clinical trials on its avian flu vaccine later this year. If that product proves successful, the company intends to apply its technology to the production of vaccines for everything from malaria to HIV. In the meantime, the company is already doing research that could lead to a vaccine for the H1N1 flu.

