

General Mills

City remains optimistic new facility will attract new owner

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"Our second main concern is getting out there and marketing it. The only good thing about this whole thing is the facility is fairly new, it's 165,000 square feet, it's very well run."

QEDC manager Chris King agreed that because facility is in such great condition, it can easily be used to entice potential companies to the area. "This building is in great shape so we think that is a positive for us, the fact that we do have a good facility and that is one of the first questions they (a potential company) ask."

King also said having an available workforce makes the area even more desirable. "The second thing companies ask when they are looking to come into an area is they want to know about the available workforce and obviously with the highly skilled and trained people at General Mills we think that would be an asset to any company coming in."

Northumberland Quinte West MPP Lou Rinaldi said he has already been in contact with the Ministry of Economic

Development and Trades to see what options are available for attracting new business. "One of things the ministry folks do is they actually go out and solicit within that industry to see if there is any interest. So I guess to put in bluntly, we have a product in Quinte West where General Mills is that could be marketable and marketable to a company that does that sort of business."

Rinaldi said within hours of learning of the closures, steps were taken by the provincial government to bring in new industry. "As of this morning we've been knocking on doors already for possibilities."

In the meantime, Rinaldi said further assistance for laid-off employees will be available through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. "Whether it is retraining or trying to help them with resumes and looking for employment," he said. "I presume we are going to set up some kind of centre for this folks to access to gain the tools to find employment."

Northumberland Quinte West MP Rick Norlock said after hearing of the closures he contacted Service Canada representatives. "We want to get a Service Canada representative down to the plant working with the human resource manager at General Mills."

Norlock said Service Canada will provide needed information about employment benefits, employment insurance and application options.

In addition, Norlock said through its partnership with Employment Ontario, the federal government will provide retraining or upgrading for affected employees.

Norlock also said all levels of government were working together to find a way to attract new business to the area. "This is a real kick in the pants for the local economy," he said. "We can look at it as a negative and throw up our hands or we can roll up our sleeves and actively go out and search down potential buyers for that plant."