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A Belleville company that produces air conditioning components for the automotive industry is anything but cool when it comes to expanding its production facilities and workforce.

Halla Climate Control Canada Inc. has been hard at work growing its operations and workforce since setting up shop here almost 15 years ago with 20 employees. You could say Halla is hot: the Korean-owned company is now considered one of the largest Belleville employers, with 800 workers producing air conditioning parts for the Big Three automakers.

Halla began with one small production facility on College Street East in 1989, and added a second manufacturing site on University Avenue in 1997.

Last July, Halla opened its third manufacturing site at 405 College St. East on a 25-acre parcel of land that was formerly a municipal snow dump. The company launched a new product line — an under-body air conditioning component for the Ford Freestar and the Chrysler Dakota pickup — and hired an additional 100 employees to handle its production there.

"It was a very busy three months launching a new plant and new business and hiring the people for it," said Halla controller Michael Allen.

All three manufacturing plants operate shifts around the clock on weekdays and, often, on weekends as needed to meet increasing customer demands.

And the company isn't done growing either, said Allen.

"We purchased that property from the city with a long-term picture in mind to continue to grow and prosper in the Belleville community," he said. "There is room to more than double the current facility...and that's the way we designed it, so that we can grow by adding on to the facility."

Its newest plant boasts 100,000 square feet of production and warehouse space and Allen said the company is hoping to some-

day expand its third plant both in size and number of people who work there.

"We surpassed our expectations when Halla opened in 1989 and we look forward to cementing our place as a leader in the manufacture of automotive components," said Allen, who has been with the local plant since its early days.

Halla produces air conditioning components for General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. These air conditioning components include H-Vac modules, accumulators and tube and hose under-body and under-hood lines.

Sales at Halla were \$10 million its first year in 1989 and topped \$130 million in 2000. It is believed that sales have since sur-

passed the \$200-million mark.

## never look back

"Sales have continued to grow at forecasted rates and we are pleased at the perfor-

mance of the company, all of its team members and suppliers," said Allen.

The controller wouldn't disclose projected sales figures for 2004 but said, "We are on track to achieve corporate goals."

Halla's third production plant will play a key role in that corporate growth because it is manufacturing new air conditioning components exclusively for the Ford Freestar minivan and the Chrysler Dakota pickup truck.

Only open for seven months, the new plant already accounts for about eight per cent of Halla's overall business.

"The third plant was necessary to provide the production capacity for this new business," Allen said. "Without the plant, we wouldn't have been able to support the new business."

Allen explained the tube and hose technology for both the Freestar and Dakota vehicles was developed by its research and development staff in Belleville.

"This new technology met the customer's requirements of improved air conditioning system performance and this resulted in Halla winning the Freestar business," he said. "For the Chrysler Dakota, Halla was