

ution centre broke its record for one day order shipments, hitting 302,981 pieces of merchandise on Oct. 25. For the week beginning Nov. 29 Sears set another record, moving 1,327,000 articles.

"We've had an aggressive expansion of our catalogue market," explains Matheson. "Our catalogue has done extremely well since '96...A good part of that is because we've really gone back and targeted the (larger) cities."

In the last two years Sears' retail partners have acquired the ability to place catalogue orders through their point of sale terminals. That allows them to order items for customers when they don't have the product in stock. There are now almost 2,000 outlets where people can order from the Sears catalogue through the point of sale terminal, pay their Sears cards and pick up their orders.

The distribution plant has added a Call Centre this year, through which people can place orders directly with the facility. The Call Centre employs about 100 people year-round and 150 at its peak period. The Central Warehouse for repair parts was also transferred here from Toronto and the company has centralized its Customer Service Department here.

But where Matheson really foresees growth is in the Internet market. Two people were hired to handle Internet inquiries last year and today the department has 15 employees. Sears' Christmas Wishbook is on the Internet and Matheson is expecting that market to grow exponentially.

While the majority of workers at the Distribution Centre are part-time, its full-time base is growing, says Matheson.

"We've (even) added more managers this year because of the growth of people. We've added more of what we call group leaders, which are your front line supervisors...We've grown to the point where we're bursting at the seams in terms of staff. We've had to expand our parking (area)." The cafeteria now has longer hours, management has added more vending machines to the centre, hired an extra human resources staff member and added an extra person to work the front desk.

"Right now we've never been better," says Matheson.