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One could say that a lot of machines are spinning their wheels at Belleville's Procter and Gamble plant. But they are anything but stuck in what is probably one of the most amazing industrial success stories in Ontario.

From a modest industrial plant and about 100 workers when it opened in 1975 producing essentially disposable diapers, the plant and its staff have grown and grown land grown and continue to do so.

The working yard and buildings area now spans some 40 acres, said spokesman Joe Csanyi during a recent tour. Another addition, announced just last December, is now under construction, estimated at about \$25 million. At 50,000 feet alone, the addition is like a small shed onto the total of the sprawling factory space.

Employment runs 600 to 700 workers full and part time plus 30 to 40 contract positions. Additional production space in the new addition, when completed, will add about 100 more jobs.

It's an ambitious, but promising future for the undisputed kingpin of Belleville's industrial players.

Even in announcing the addition for \$25 million last December, the company news release noted it is part of a total capital investment of about \$40 million planned for the plant over the next few years.

Long gone is the original line of diapers. The Belleville plant now supplies the entire North American market for P & G's Always feminine hygiene products, which alone represent about 50 individual products in sizes and styles.

The company's popular brand of medicated fibre wipes called Olay facials is also produced at the Belleville plant. "We serve the global market for Olays," said Csanyi, noting the plant exports to more than 15 countries. That product represents about 70 different production lines.

Apart from being a success story within its own sprawling international corporate structure, the Belleville plant has consistently been a leader as a corporate citizen, being one of the major corporate supporters of the Quinte United Way. The Procter and Gamble Corporation itself, in recognition of its Belleville plant's achievements, donated \$1 million toward the Belleville General

Hospital family centre, which is now named after the company.

That was one of the largest single corporate donations if not the largest Procter and Gamble has ever made, said Csanyi.

Established at Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1837, Procter and Gamble products have become household words to hundreds of millions of North Americans, one of the earliest being floating Ivory soap. Making simple carvings out of the soap was a basic junior school project in Ontario decades ago.

A basic kitchen product, Crisco, was introduced in 1911, almost 100 years ago, and remains a staple.

The company's first plant outside of the United States was at Hamilton in 1915 and a number of employees at that plant were among the first hired at the new Belleville plant in 1975, Csanyi noted.

From its beginnings in North America's early industrial age and dealing with then-volatile materials to make candles and soaps, fire was a constant hazard. This led to a long-standing company policy for fire prevention and in-house protection and training.

The Belleville plant, for instance, maintains its own fully-trained in-house firefighting force, along with the necessary equipment, under plant fire chief Gene Thompson.

"We're very proud of them," said Csanyi. "They do excellent work in the plant and many of them also serve as volunteer firefighters in their respective communities."

Workers at this plant enjoy a clean, relatively quiet, temperature-controlled working environment. The rambling main office area is divided into streets with names like Queensborough Track and Picton Avenue, acknowledging that the plant's work force comes from a 80-kilometre radius, as far as Kingston, said Csanyi.

To keep quality and productivity up to date, the plant is continually upgrading high-tech production equipment, he said.

And to reinforce the constant reality of competition, product display areas in the office show samples and prices of both in-plant products and their competitor's counterparts.

Maybe not every little acorn produces a great oak, but figuratively speaking, the small factory Procter and Gamble planted in Belleville in 1975 certainly became one and continues to grow.