

It will be "business as usual" for two competing furniture stores in Belleville even though they are now owned by the same company.

The Brick Warehouse Corporation announced late last week that an affiliated company of "The Brick" has purchased United Furniture Warehouse Ltd. and its chain of 82 stores across Canada.

Richard Byers, Brick's vice-president of marketing, told The Intelligencer from his Edmonton office that both the Brick and United Furniture stores located almost directly opposite one another on Pinnacle Street, will continue to operate as separate entities under their current names.

"Both companies will operate independently," he said. "Employees of United Furniture have all been offered employment with the new company and it's almost been a unanimous acceptance of the new structure."

Byers said the purchase of United does not affect the Brick operation nor its employees. The Brick has 75 locations in Canada and is in the process of opening its first six locations in Quebec (five in Montreal).

Belleville, he noted, is one of about 30 Canadian cities that boasts both a Brick and United Furniture store.

"Both operations will continue operating status quo in Belleville with the same number of employees. There will be no major change either at the Brick or at United Furniture and it will be business as usual at both locations," he said.

The Brick employs almost 40 people at its 360 Pinnacle St. location.

There are four employees at the United Furniture store at 315 Pinnacle St.

John Orr, United Furniture store manager, said he is pleased with the purchase by the Brick.

"It will only affect the operation for the better. It will increase business as far as I can see."

He said his store will be able to carry special promotions on top of its regular low prices.

"We will offer other merchandise at even lower prices," Orr said.

The Brick is owned by Bill Comrie of Edmonton. An affiliate company, also owned by Comrie, purchased United Furniture.

The Brick's Byers said both chains will continue with their existing retail philosophies.

The Brick will remain focused on offering Canadians good values on the brand name furniture, mattresses, appliances, electronics and big screen televisions and with such full service features as deferred payment offers and same day delivery.

United Furniture, meanwhile, will continue to operate under the same "no frills" philosophy and offering a selection of value priced furniture and mattresses with a focus on first-time buyers and single income Canadian families.

Kim Yost, president and CEO of the Brick said the acquisition "will allow the corporation to effectively reach a broader range of Canadian consumers with relevant value priced furniture."

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