

Every time new products were added for manufacture, there was another expansion to the Cobourg plant. General Foods grew bigger and bigger. From the original red brick buildings on Ontario St., the company eventually spanned many acres, from Ontario to William St. By the late 60s, the 600 employees of General Foods manufactured a greater variety of packaged products than any other General Foods plant in North America.

## GENERAL FOODS → PHILIP MORRIS → KRAFT

General Foods was a significant presence in Cobourg for nearly 70 years. One in ten Cobourg residents worked at General Foods, making them the town's largest employer. In its heyday in the 70s, General Foods employed 1,000 – 1,200 people. The town of Cobourg thrived as General Foods grew.

In the 80s the huge Philip Morris Company bought both General Foods (1985) and Kraft Inc. (1988), merging the two to form Kraft General Foods Inc, the largest U.S. food company. Some former General Foods employees wonder, when the dangers of cigarette smoking became very public, did Philip Morris decide that it was time to diversify to improve its public image, and so bought a food corporation? In any case, Philip Morris wisely retained the popular Kraft brand name on the many products it now owned.



## SIGNIFICANCE OF KRAFT CLOSURE TO COBOURG

Beginning with the departure of the plant's research facilities for points south in 1992, the company gradually shrank in Cobourg. In 2008, the Kraft plant here closed and a food industry that had lasted close to a century is no more.

When Kraft ceased operations in Cobourg, 380 people lost their jobs. A huge manufacturing facility was empty. The entire 69 acre facility was sold to private enterprise for \$2.6 million. Some of the buildings are rented out. Northumberland United Way, Food 4 All Warehouse and Emergency Medical Services are there, but the facility is by no means fully rented. Reduced employment and reduced taxes continue to put a drain on the local economy.

After close to a century of food production in Cobourg, Certo, General Foods and Kraft that were so much a part of Cobourg's heritage are gone, but the story continues. Will a medical marijuana factory be a part of it?

