

PANDEMIC PLUS HOLIDAY PREP PUTS THE PINCH ON ONLINE SHOPPING

METROLAND MEDIA LAUNCHES NEW DELIVERY SERVICE TO FILL GAP

CHRIS TRABER

As COVID-era consumers embrace the convenience and sequestered safety of online shopping, retailers are increasingly tasked to ensure prompt and reliable parcel delivery.

Statistics Canada reported a record \$3.9 billion in e-commerce sales in May, a 2.3 per cent hike over April and a 99.3 per cent increase over February. The pre-holiday numbers are on an upward trajectory said the agency, noting Canadians now do 10 per cent of their spending online.

The pandemic, causing many brick-and-mortar

stores to close, has created massive demand and opportunity for delivery services, an industry valued annually at \$12 billion nationally and \$4.5 billion in Ontario.

This is a windfall not without challenges for delivery businesses, said LinkEdge Consultancy managing partner Brian Meagher.

"Holiday delivery issues have been around for a long time," said Meagher who consulted Metroland Media in the planning of its new parcel delivery service launched earlier this month. "There has been a history of early cut-off times and that disappoints many consumers. This year, it could be a significantly bigger issue for everyone."

The fact that almost 50 per cent of consumers will shop online this year to avoid large crowds, and retailers want more delivery



Nick Kozak/Torstar

Patricia Chambers, 4, with her parents Stephanie Martin, left, Jason Chambers, at home in Whitchurch-Stouffville with the first package delivered by Metroland Parcel Services, Nov. 14. The new venture provides parcel delivery for retailers and distributors.

options, was the genesis to create and launch Metroland Parcel Services, said Mike Banville, who leads the new service.

Metroland, a division of Torstar Corporation, pub-

lishes more than 70 community and daily newspapers delivered to 70 per cent of Southern Ontario households by a network of 15,000 delivery contractors. Metroland's facility hubs,

distribution networks and expertise ideally positions the organization to successfully extend its services into parcel delivery, said Banville.

"Our research and clients tell us e-commerce channel growth has exploded and is largely expected to sustain post-COVID. Parcel carriers are struggling to meet service level commitments. Some carriers have inconvenient hard stop deadlines for holiday deliveries," he said.

"Our new solution is designed to deliver a high value premium final mile parcel delivery experience in Ontario right up to Christmas Eve and beyond."

Metroland's strategy and parcel delivery commitment struck an important chord with Toys R Us Canada president and CEO Vic Bertrand.

"Toys R Us is focused on serving Canadians with

what they want, when they want, and how they want it," said Bertrand. "The how is where Metroland comes in."

Delivery makes up the majority of Toys R Us e-commerce transactions, followed by pickup and curbside, explained Bertrand, adding that the capacity constraints on delivery last holiday, and through the pandemic, will persist through this holiday season.

"That's why we're thrilled to be on board with Metroland. Their service is both timely and targeted for our exponential growth in the Golden Horseshoe. Our e-commerce sales have risen triple-digit overall since the pandemic."

"Metroland has a unique, high volume distribution footprint in Ontario that is well-positioned to respond to our last mile delivery needs."

For information, visit metrolandparcelservices.ca or email mabanville@metroland.com.



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Q: How do I get my kids to brush their teeth?

A: You know it's important for your child's health. As a parent, you want to do the right thing. When it comes to regular tooth brushing, though, it's become a struggle just to get your child to brush their teeth.

Some parents, unfortunately, give in and allow their children to neglect good oral hygiene. Don't make the mistake! Your children should be taught very early how to brush. This can be encouraged as a regular habit by using some of the flavored children's toothpastes now available. Try to reserve brushing for the same time each day so it comes to be an expected activity. If your child still resists, make a game of it. You may even wish to pretend to be a "dentist" for your child, in the process doing the needed brushing for them. Older children may respond to a reward system that you establish.

Perhaps most important, set a good example. Your daily brushing, flossing, and avoidance of sweets will do more to develop good dental habits than anything else.

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