

# Real Estate / Business

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## Modern electronics facility

# Ford opens plant in Milliken



Cleopatra Ellakis (foreground) and Eva Tzoidis check car radios for sound quality at the Ford Motor Company's electronics plant that recently opened on Birchmount Rd. in Milliken. The facility employs 1,200 people.

By PAULA CROWELL  
Staff Reporter

A new car controls system that will make climbing behind the wheel like taking a seat in cockpit is being designed, tested and built in Milliken.

But motorists shouldn't hold their breath waiting for their new toys—the system isn't due to be available in production cars until the early 1990s.

It's in the experimental stage at the Ford Electronics Manufacturing Corporation which recently opened on Birchmount Ave. Ford has designed a 'pod' attached to the steering column behind the steering wheel, which allows the driver to operate 10-common functions, from turning on headlights and windshield wipers, to adjusting radio volume without taking his hands from the wheel.

The instrument panel provides the driver with information about the state of the car while in motion. It can reveal how much gas is in the tank and gas mileage. It allows the driver to adjust inside temperature by touching a screen with the words warmer, cooler, vent, mix, hi, lo, and auto. The screen also displays date and time as well as present car temperature.

The system also includes an AM/FM stereo with automatic Dolby noise reduction and graphic equalizer and liquid crystal display (LCD) of the radio frequency number.

LCD displays of speed and mileage and servicing alerts are other features.

At a press conference last week, the company, formerly Philco-Ford of Canada, debuted the new system in the Continental Mark VII Comtech. Comtech stands for the computer technology advances which distinguish the car from others in its class.



DON PETERSEN  
President of Ford

Ford has produced a few thousand Comtech cars which they will test in the plant and on the road.

When asked if the driver could run into problems relying on the computer technology in the car, Ford President Don Petersen said, "We'll have to be careful to design it fail safe. If componentry fails, the remaining part of the auto must be safe."

"It's up to us to see that failure is in a safe mode," he added.

The Milliken plant was built to replace the company's former headquarters in Don Mills. Justin Oliver, plant manager said the company needed a lot more room.

"I was looking for real estate that had room to expand," he said. "We had two small buildings down there. It was more expensive to connect the buildings than to build a new one."

"Markham has the proper tax base and the proper attitude toward industry," he continued. "It also had the proper site—surrounded by high technology industries."

Mr. Oliver also took into consideration the 1,200 employees who would have to relocate.

"There's lots of property around the airport, but to minimize discomfort to employees we chose Markham even though its more expensive."

"We wanted to be on TTC routes (which an airport location wouldn't provide)," he explained.

Mr. Oliver said all the employees moved with the company. The 10-mile move was completed for opening ceremonies Tuesday, July 31.

A feature of the new plant is a training centre for administrative and plant workers.

The company is looking toward future growth. Mr. Petersen said, "No other area of our business is changing as fast as electronics."

He noted that the value of electronic equipment in cars increased 10 times from 1970 to 1980 and by 1984 the average car contains \$600 (U.S.) worth of electronics. Mr. Petersen expects this amount to increase to \$1,500 (U.S.) in the next 10 years.

The plant is being equipped with electronic eyes to better detect flaws in components, computer-controlled chip mounting equipment which does in one second what human hands do in five seconds.

It will also use smart-cart robots for materials handling and an automatic climate-control system for a better working environment. Mr. Petersen added "the plant is designed to integrate future auto improvement systems."

These innovations are estimated at \$12 million. Ford plans to invest \$53 million more by 1986.

"You have as modern a plant as exists in the world today," said Mr. Petersen. "It represents a significant step toward the factory of the future."



Clara Strongoli (left), a group leader, helps Sandra Man finish off the wiring on a component. The plant is not yet complete as \$53 million of high tech equipment is still to be added.



This 2,600-sq. ft. home is located just north of Stouffville on an attractive lot that eventually will have two lakes visible from the backyard. The home is selling for \$155,800.

## Home of the Week Country estate located north of Stouffville

A country estate development on the south-west corner of Bloomington Road and 9th Line just north of Stouffville is the setting for our Home of the Week.

It's a four-bedroom brick sidesplit on a landscaped lot with the back of the home overlooking another future estate development with two lakes.

A central ceramic tile hallway leads to a sitting room and an adjoining dining room. Behind it is the kitchen which has a dining area and a sizeable workspace with plenty of cupboard space.

A short stairway leads to a very large family room with a fireplace and a walkout to a poolsize backyard with a covered patio.

There is a laundry room and a sewing room on this level also. The main floor also has a two-piece bathroom.

The upstairs master bedroom has a four-piece en suite and a walk-in closet. Three other bedrooms and another four-piece bathroom complete the upstairs.

Other features in the home include a forced-air gas furnace, ceramic tile in the kitchen, plush broadloom, plaster walls and ceilings, and aluminum soffit and fascia. The house also has a two-car garage.

This 2,600-square-foot home is for sale for \$155,800. The agent is Lee Weldon of Gerry Meharg Ltd., Realtor and can be reached by calling 640-3131 or 640-2770.



The kitchen is large and functional with a dining area and plenty of cupboard space. It features ceramic tile.



The large family room has many features including a double door that leads to a spacious backyard. Also prominent is a fireplace and more than adequate shelf space.



The master bedroom has a four-piece ensuite and walk-in closet. It is large and attractive. There are three more bedrooms upstairs.