



DEAL SEALED: (From left) Stouffville economic development officer Eric Lismanis, new industry co-owner Jeff Usling for Gemini Store Fixtures, Chamber of Commerce president Helene Johnson and Stouffville Mayor Wayne Emmerson gather at the site of the former Eric Manufacturing plant on Hwy 48 in Ballantrae Wednesday to welcome the new business to occupy the site starting in January. Photo by SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Erie Mfg. seals deal; new industry brings 20 jobs

Christmas will come to Ballantrae three days early when a Scarborough-based store fixture manufacturing company relocates to the spot presently occupied by Erie Manufacturing, *The Tribune* has learned.

Industry co-owner Jeff Usling confirmed yesterday (Wednesday) that the deal between Gemini Store Fixtures Ltd. and Erie is sealed.

Meanwhile, ownership of the 30,000-square foot building, complete with five acres of land is in the process of being transferred.

With it, comes an increased industrial base for Whitchurch-Stouffville, the promise of a community minded "clean" industry and jobs for local residents.

About 20 jobs must be filled very soon, said Usling.

Two months ago, 50 employees of Erie Manufacturing learned that a restructuring of the U.S.-owned company would mean a plant closure and job loss.

The shutdown at Erie triggered concern in the community. People asked what's in store for the Erie spot. The answer was not long in coming.

On December 22, accompanied by 10 former employees, Gemini will pack up \$750,000-worth of wood working equipment from its Tap Scott Rd. location and move it to the Highway 48 site.

There, the company will manufacture such products as cash counters and display cabinets.

As well as overseeing the move, Usling has issued a call to hire. In particular, Usling invites those with experience in cabinet making and wood finishing.

SPECIAL REPORT



Joan Ransberry

As well, he needs wood machinists and general labourers.

Anyone interested in employment is asked to fax a resume to Usling at 416-609-9275.

NEED WORKERS NOW

The plan is to have the business up and running by mid-January. "Yes, I need workers now," he said.

Gemini will be a one-shift a-day operation, running from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Most of the wood will arrive already treated. This means the use of chemicals will be at a minimal. "It's environmentally friendly," said Usling.

The neighborhood will not experience traffic problems. "About five trucks a-week will arrive at the site," said Usling.

Show cases and cash counters built by Gemini are sold to such stores as Eatons and the Bay and major music outlets. "Almost all of our business is done in Canada," said Usling.

In business in Scarborough for about 10 years, Usling and his partner Jack Fernandes carry out \$3-million a-year in sales.

When putting the wheels in motion to buy the Ballantrae site, Usling met with town officials, including Mayor Wayne Emmerson, chief administrative officer Merlin

Dewing and Economic development officer Eric Lismanis.

"I was very impressed with the town," said Usling. "They were very encouraging in wanting us to move here."

Emmerson is laying out the town's welcome mat. "There were three or four interested in buying the plant," said Emmerson. "This is great. He's a local fellow."

Being part of a deal that delivers jobs to a community is "always a pleasure," said Lismanis.

The move will mean spin-off business for local companies, said Usling. Stouffville suppliers for such goods as wood, glass and hardware will be used, said Usling. This part of the plan is "good news" for the economic health of the community, stressed Lismanis.

There's been a "lack of loyalty" within the Stouffville business community, said Lismanis. "This is the kind of approach that's needed."

The fact that Gemini is a "clean" industry sweetens the pot, said local Chamber of Commerce president Helene Johnson. "This is exciting. I welcome them," said Johnson.

Usling and his wife Sylvia left their home in Stouffville and moved to the McCowan Road and St. John Sideroad area four years ago.

The couple has three children—all toddlers.

Wood working runs in the family. Usling's father was a wood builder contractor.

"I worked with my dad for years. When he retired, I opened my own wood business. And, now I can run the business from my community," said Usling.

Fund helps boost town industry

Stouffer Vision Fund officials have reason to celebrate.

Yesterday, when Gemini Store Fixtures Ltd. confirmed that it was opening a manufacturing plant in Ballantrae in January, Eric Lismanis, the town's economic development officer, was recognized for helping to orchestrate the deal.

Lismanis was a key player in the store fixture manufacturing plant coming to town, said Gemini owner Jeff Usling.

The town has an economic development officer thanks to the Stouffer Vision Fund.

In January, the Economic Development Action Committee (EDAC) affiliated with the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce, established the fund.

The goal was to enhance local business by raising \$100,000 each from the local business community and from the town. This enabled EDAC to put an economic development officer in place for two years. Lismanis was hired and put to work. His job is to sell Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Lismanis is optimistic: From an economic standpoint, things are looking up. The Canadian economy is expected to grow by almost four per cent in the coming year, while consumer confidence and spending is up nation-wide.

While Gemini sets up shop and hires local workers, neither EDAC officials nor Lismanis will be idle. The need to secure additional support for the Stouffer Vision Fund continues, while Lismanis will keep encouraging existing business to stay and to grow and he'll continue to attract more business to Whitchurch-Stouffville.



LISMANIS

—Joan Ransberry



THE SEASONS CHANGE: Derek McDougall, of the Stouffville parks and recreation department, takes down the summerflags from the Main Street lampposts with co-worker Ted Tindell (not in picture) on Tuesday Nov.18 so Christmas wreaths can take their place (inset).

Flyer Inserts For Thursday, November 20, 1997

Markville Shopping Centre
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Sears - 2 Day Power Sale*

The Bay - Scratch & Save*
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Melissa or Ruth at (905) 640-2100

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Stouffville