



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

President Cindy Lee, centre, is surrounded by store employees during a celebratory chant at the grand opening of a new Asian grocery store at Promenade Mall.

Company hopes to raise profile with market site

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

President Canada Group has marked its foray into the GTA by opening a 65,000-square-foot T&T Supermarkets outlet in Thornhill.

"We want to try and open up a brand new market," said Eddie Yip, a marketing assistant with the chain. "We're promoting fresh and new ideas."

The new T&T Supermarket occupies the ground floor of the former Eaton's outlet in Thornhill's Promenade Shopping Centre. The second floor is the site of an Old Navy outlet.

The York Region store extends the reach of parent company President Canada Group, which operates seven T&T stores in the Greater Vancouver Area and one in Calgary.

The large-scale markets promote one-stop shopping, with more than 10,000 Asian and western food items under one roof. The Thornhill store also offers an eat-in food court, an on-site bakery and special sections for seafood, meat, vegetables and sushi, Mr. Yip said.

T & T supermarkets join what is an already thriving Asian business community here, said Darren Ciaszko, economic development officer with Markham.

"I think it's indicative of the vibrant,

well-established Chinese community in the town of Markham," Mr. Ciaszko said.

More than 20 per cent of Markham's 350,000 residents are of Chinese descent, a statistic that is not lost on Asian business people, Mr. Ciaszko said.

The town actively pursues Chinese entrepreneurs, particularly high tech and information firms. Councillor Tony Wong recently led a business mission to the nation of more than one billion people.

"There are many areas of China that are looking to explore the Markham market," Mr. Ciaszko said.

The town is responding to that interest by promoting its existing business community and services.

"We're building on our strengths," Mr. Ciaszko said.

"Now is the time to plant the seed," he said. "China is only going to become a more important power on the world market. You could say (the potential for growth here) is limitless."

The new outlet is located outside the established Chinese community in Markham, a strategic placement that aims to raise the store's profile, Mr. Yip said, adding competition among Asian markets "is pretty high".

"We want to stand out more than other supermarkets."

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