

Pfizer picks Markham

Health services company
latest bio-tech firm to move

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

With its official opening Friday, Pfizer Consumer Healthcare Canada becomes the newest corporate neighbour in Markham's fast growing biotech, pharmaceutical and health-services community.

With many of the company's 300 employees looking on, vice-president and general manager Jon Coleman welcomed guests and dignitaries including Markham Mayor Don Cousens, Markham MPP Tony Wong and federal Minister of National Revenue John McCallum.

The renovated 75,000-square-foot location at 88 McNabb St. was selected as Pfizer's Canadian head office principally on the benefits of living and doing business in Markham, Mr. Coleman said.

"We analyzed employee postal codes on a map when we first looked for potential locations and Markham was very convenient for the majority of our colleagues," he said. "Markham itself was the main thing. The municipality is known for innovation. Transportation infrastructure, shops, day care and all the benefits and conveniences were part of the decision."

"The neighbourhood felt like the place to be."

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The 156-year old company's administrative centre was designed to inspire employees with staff-friendly facilities and policies.

"Innovation Thursdays" are reserved for employees to gather in the central atrium to discuss weekly topics and share ideas. Other blocks of time must be voice and e-mail-free to allow staff unencumbered time to focus. Recreation amenities, such as ball hockey and basketball nets and company bicycles are available when workers need a diversion.

Pfizer's decision to relocate to Markham from Toronto is an endorsement of Markham's appeal as a commercial centre, Mr. Cousens said.

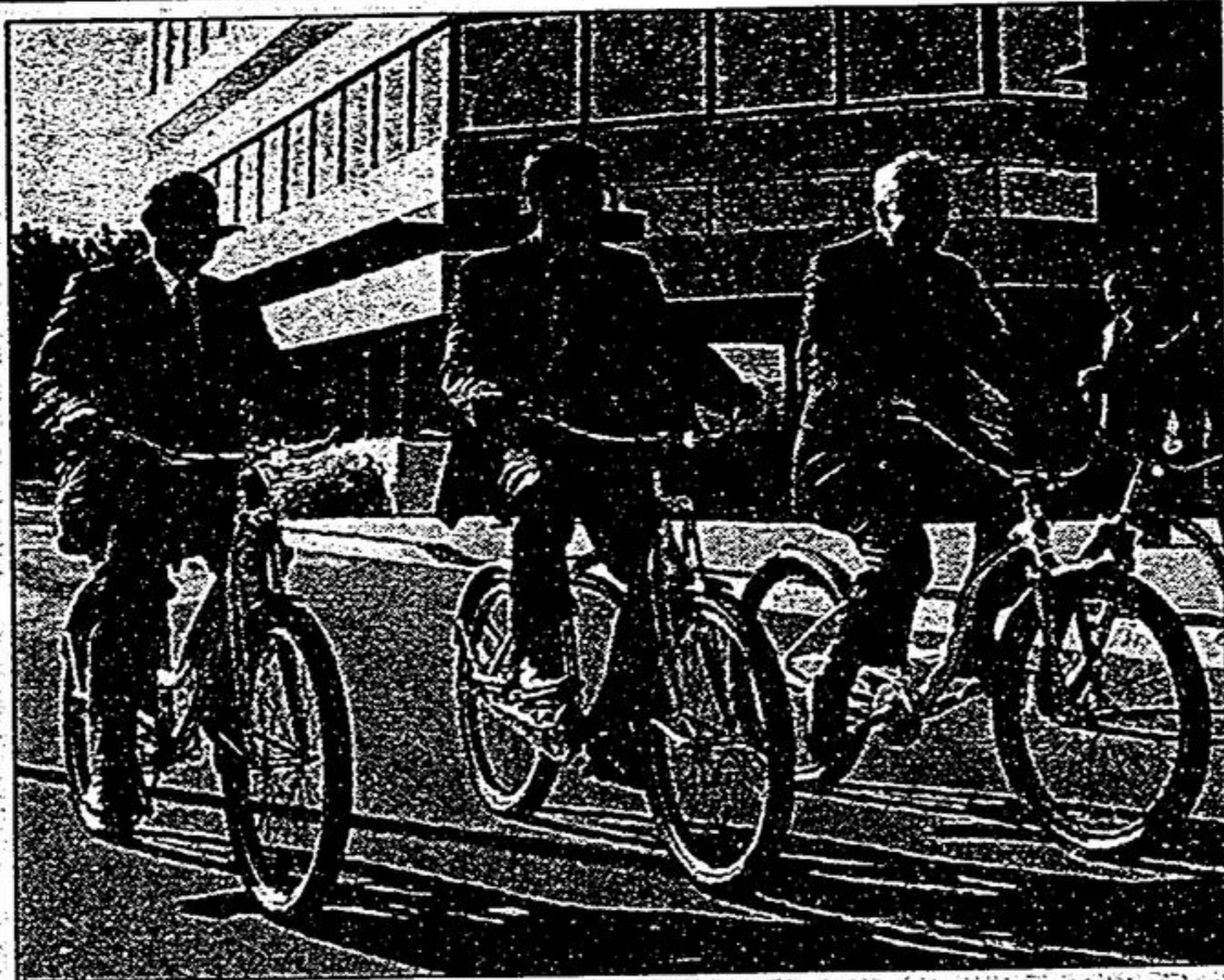
"We're getting a cluster of biotech, drug and health-related companies from the GTA and Canada," he said.

"There's real movement to Markham for a combination of reasons. The quality of life here is good, business taxes compared to Toronto are about 40 per cent less and these companies know they're welcome."

Pfizer specializes in an extensive range of non-prescription healthcare products from smoking cessation to cold and allergy relief and skin care. Recognizable brands include Listerine, Polysporin and Nicorette.

Mr. Cousens offered the company a mayoral plug, saying he uses Pfizer's Purell hand sanitizer ten times daily.

"Anyone who shakes hands as often as I do needs to use it," he said.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

As part of its health strategy, Pfizer Consumer Healthcare provides four bicycles for employees to use during breaks. Markham Mayor Donald Cousens (left), Pfizer Canadian vice-president and general manager Jon Coleman and Markham MP and Energy Minister John McCallum try out the bikes.



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