

Border Investments Speed Up Trade



FORT ERIE
Gazette
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM CORPORATION

Peace Bridge general manager Ron Rienas, left, and Fort Erie EDTC general manager Jim Thibert, overlook construction at the Canadian plaza which will become a grand gateway to Canada. The \$42-million investment will improve traffic, staff conditions, trade and the environment.

Fleet Canada launched

Fleet Canada Inc. rolled out its first workforce, first product and its first customer, Bombardier Aerospace on March 10th of this year.

Three years after Magellan Aerospace announced it would close the 76-year-old plant, a new employee-owned company now operates the 500,000 square-foot facility at Gilmore Road and the QEW.

The new Fleet Canada Inc. will supply external fuselage and wing panel components for Bombardier's Dash 8 Q-series 300 and 400 turboprop aircraft.

"This is an exciting day for the entire community," said Mayor Wayne Redekop during the ribbon-cutting ceremony March 10.

"There are opportunities for growth with this company," he told the employees and others gathered for the ceremony.

"And that means many of your colleagues will be called back to work here."

Workers, investors, management "did something that is completely new and cutting edge in how you create a business out of the remnants of what's left" in the transi-

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Fleet Canada Inc. — Made in Fort Erie

Fleet Canada employees stand by as Glenn Stansfield, CEO and president of the new employee-owned company, fields questions from a reporter during grand opening ceremony March 10. Thousands of men and women worked at the 76-year-old factory through its history making aerospace, Fleet and Fort Erie synonymous with each other "in days gone by and now in the future," said Mayor Wayne Redekop.

North Dakota comes to Stevensville

DMI Industries begins production out of local plant

Before contractors have even completed their jobs, DMI Industries employees are filling orders for wind turbine towers at its new plant in Stevensville.

In the completely refurbished factory which formerly housed automotive part manufacturer Ronal, they are working toward their first ship date of May 26.

The towers which measure nearly 200 feet and 15 feet in diameter are manufactured and shipped in three 65-foot sections each weighing as much as 53 tons.

Work to re-engineer the plant began almost immediately after DMI announced in October it had chosen Fort Erie as the location for its first plant outside the United States.

It was indicative of the company's get-to-it attitude and serious dedication to its goals.

The final choice came after months of careful investigation of many communities in Ontario.

"President Lars Moeller has stated publicly many times that Fort Erie was chosen because they demonstrated they understood the timeframes DMI was working with and gave them the confidence

Please turn to DMI

Jack Porter, left, Jim Major, and operations manager Paul Smith are among the first 30 employees now working at DMI Industries' new factory in Stevensville.



Jobs, product, customer, pride

“ We started it to be part of Fleet, to keep it an aerospace company, to keep it in Fort Erie, and it was ours. ”

Continued from previous page

tion from heavy to light industry, he said.

Mayor Redekop pointed out that the Fort Erie Economic Development and Tourism Corporation played a key role in saving Fleet.

“We are the first investor, the first shareholder, and we will always be a shareholder,” said the EDTC’s general manager Jim Thibert.

“Investments like that are something we are able to do because we are a corporation and not a Town department,” he said.

The new company, Fleet Canada, currently employs nearly 70 people — perhaps 100 by the end of the year — and a five-year union agreement is in place.

Investment capital was provided by the Niagara Growth Fund, a partnership of bankers established to finance Niagara area business ventures.

“There’s very significant investments in the millions to get them on their way,” said Mr. Thibert. “Lease, cashflow, employment costs, inventory.”

A closure was on the horizon before a strike stopped production in October 2002 and the Mayor and he “did shuttle diplomacy to keep a dialog open,” he said.

When the dialog failed and closure announced February 2003, a plan was already in the works.

“So we developed a strategy from the EDTC board. Magellan would keep the doors open for 16 months and we’d help them move 500,000 square feet of space and 60-80 acres of land,” he said.

The EDTC then funded \$10,000 for a consultant to see if aerospace was feasible. Working with Dan Zanatta, the general

“ They could have boarded the plane up two years ago and said see ya later, but they didn’t. ”

manager of old Fleet, they found Stansfield at the Niagara Enterprise Agency.

“He used to work there so he knew the industry, he had the contacts. If there was someone custom-made for this deal, it was Glenn,” Mr. Thibert said.

The pre-feasibility study was done and more detailed analysis followed. Employee investments were sought and found.

“That’s when Glenn really took over,” Thibert said. “Magellan was very good. They gave him space, everything he needed. We really respect Magellan for that.”

“Magellan and its chairman Murray Edwards bent over backwards to accommodate the transition, they really went to the well for us,” Mr. Thibert said.

“They could have boarded the plane up two years ago and said see ya later, but they didn’t.”

A 16-member acquisition steering committee of managers, employees, union



Fleet Canada Inc. president and chief executive officer Glenn Stansfield smiles with Mayor Wayne Redekop, Bombardier vice-president Todd Young and Niagara Growth Fund chairman Frazer. Below, Joe Aliberti, the first employee shareholder of Fleet Canada, helps hold the ribbon for the grand launch ceremony March 10.

members and investors was formed to guide the takeover.

“I couldn’t be prouder to be an investor

in Fleet Canada,” said Joe Aliberti, among the first employee investors.

“I can’t tell you how pleased I am to be standing here with all of you in the bondshop after this journey,” he said at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

“Through all of this, Glenn never wavered once, never showed fear, never showed panic. He would always come up with different options,” Mr. Aliberti said. “This didn’t go on for weeks — it went on for months, which became years . . . that’s why we’re here, because nobody gave up.”

Fleet Canada is embedded in Canadian aviation history and it will continue to make history, he said.

“Some day our kids are going to look back upon this and know we did this with Fleet Canada, and you can’t be prouder than that.”

Aliberti was offered the chance last year to sell his share in the new company and it

took him three seconds to decline.

“We started it to be part of Fleet, to keep it an aerospace company, keep it here in Fort Erie, and it was going to be ours.”

The market for turboprop aircraft has rebounded significantly because of the rising cost of fuel.

Todd Young, vice-president and general manager of Bombardier turboprops, said they outsold regional jets last year for the first time in many years.

Fleet workers had made components for

Dash 8’s for a number of years.

“Our planes are flown around the world and you are a big factor to the fact that we do make aviation history,” Young said.

“What we’ve done together with Glenn is create the possibility of a future and it’s the turn of the employees of Fleet Canada Inc. to make it happen,” he said.

Mr. Stansfield said that if there was one thing he was most proud about, “it’s that so many people showed faith in what we could do and there was a business here worth preserving.”





Behind the shiny walls is the yet to be finished blast room where 65-foot long tower sections will be sandblasted and painted.

DMI towers to be shipped end of May

Continued

we would meet their construction deadlines” said Jim Thibert, general manager of the Fort Erie EDTC.

“We pulled together a comprehensive development team that included all the key municipal department heads, general contractor, legal, human resources, Customs, Provincial departments, the Niagara Economic Development Corporation and everyone pulled together to make it happen for DMI, he said.

“I am very proud of the collaborative efforts and effective staff involvement,” said Mayor Wayne Redekop who is also a Board member of the EDTC.

While contractors currently work to finish electrical, ventilation and machine installation, DMI employees are moving ahead to meet the first ship date.

Large steel plates, pre-cut, bevelled and cleaned at the DMI factory in North Dakota and shipped by rail, are rolled into 15-foot diameter “cans” which are welded end-to-end to form tower sections.

Depending on the size, either two or three sections are assembled to erect the towers at the customers site.

Since the completed towers are tapered, the cans and sections are not perfect cylinders. They’re larger at the bottom.

A section is then prepared to accept the 5,000 internal parts that are inside a completed tower — hatches are cut, bolt holes threaded and safety ladders added, etc.

Once the “blast shop” is brought on line, the sections can then be sandblasted and painted and internal parts installed.

Thirty people now are employed by DMI, not including contractors, 70 will be on hand when the production line is complete, and 100 by the end of the year.

Paul Smith, general manager of DMI’s local manufacturing operation, said the company will ship two towers per week starting the end of May.

That will fill a two-year backlog with General Electric and single-shift plant capacity will be at 150 full towers



Jim Major grinds off excess weld from the inside of a “can” which will be welded to other cans to form a tower section. Twenty-eight cans in total make up a wind energy turbine tower in three 65-foot long sections. DMI which is housed in the former Ronal manufacturing plant in Stevensville will ship its first two towers on May 26.



DMI’s plant on Eagle Street (right) is situated next to a rail line on which raw material — large steel plates — are brought in for forming and assembly.

annually by the end of 2006.

Until DMI has established a local supply chain, internal parts, such as ladders, landings, bus bars, power conduits, lighting and much more, will be shipped from North Dakota for installation.

“It will be a couple of quarters, even into next year, before we take all that and become completely autonomous,” Mr. Smith said.

Future plans also call for earlier stage work to be done in Fort Erie — cutting and other preparation of the plates.

The location on Eagle Street is perfect for what DMI needed — large building on a large property near the QEW and the Peace Bridge — right in the middle of two major North American markets.

In anticipation of a DMI decision and to support the many new industries locating on Eagle Street, the Town tendered Reconstruction of Eagle Street to handle the potential of the Stevensville industrial park.

And DMI management were able to find in Fort Erie staff who were knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

“A lot of people know a lot of things,” said Mr. Moeller. “But not everyone can put two and two together and get stuff done.”

In studying where to locate DMI, Fort Erie was found to stack up very well and eventually outranked the other communities in consideration.

“That’s very good news for Fort Erie,” said mayor Wayne Redekop.

“DMI really knows what they are doing,” he said. Thorough investigation and due diligence led them to Fort Erie.

They started with 22 potential locations and paired them down to three — Hamilton, Owen Sound and Fort Erie.

One of the significant decision factors was the coopera-

tive spirit they found in Fort Erie.

“We had people volunteering their time to meet with them,” said chief administrative officer Harry Schlange.

“It speaks to their natural pride staff have to make things work for the client,” he said.

The railway siding — now used for raw material receiving — will be a benefit for customers, said Mr. Smith. “We hope to educate them on the value of shipments by rail.”

Meanwhile, a perfectly accessible 400-series highway is nearby as a link to Ontario, the Peace Bridge and the northeast U.S.

Completed tower sections will sit in the DMI yard for pickup by customers.

“You can imagine, you lay a couple towers down, you use a lot of real estate,” Mr. Smith said.

The property is vast stretching from Winger Road to ACG Canada, from the rail siding to Eagle Street.

About half has been prepared to handle the heavy loads that will be shuttled about by a 150-ton capacity crawler.

“We’re going to need it all soon,” he said, noting the rest of the property is slated to be landscaped and made into a storage yard.

Wind energy generation is well established and on the rise around the world. Ontario gave it a boost when the government announced it would support wind projects to lessen the need for fossil fuel-fired electricity stations.

“DMI will be a huge asset to Fort Erie,” said Fort Erie Economic Development and Tourism Corporation general manager Jim Thibert.

“They have many U.S. and European business clients who will no doubt be visiting their new plant and would be able to see first hand, why DMI chose Fort Erie, and perhaps they should as well.”

Peace Bridge: Gateway to Canada



The \$42-million high-tech renovation of the Fort Erie and Buffalo plazas at the Peace Bridge is now in its second phase and has already resulted in improved border wait times even with enhanced security measures.

“This is huge for us,” said Economic Development and Tourism Corporation general manager Jim Thibert.

“Nothing has greater impact on Canadian business and jobs than the border,” he said.

A \$600-million Canadian government initiative, the Border Infrastructure Fund, was announced in 2002 to improve the overall health of the U.S./Canada border.

In Fort Erie/Buffalo, government investment is matched 50/50 from tolls paid at the Peace Bridge, the second busiest border crossing in Canada.

“When this entire project is completed in November it will be like a heart transplant to revitalize the border operations,” said Ron Rienas, general manager of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority.

Meanwhile, the PBA administration building — transferred from Buffalo — and new Canadian Customs and Immigration buildings have taken shape since

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Peace Bridge general manager Ron Rienas shows EDTC general manager Jim Thibert that no angle is cut the same on the timber which will form the frame of the canopy covering Canadian passenger inspection facilities as seen from the roof of the new Peace Bridge Administration building overlooking the plaza. Buses will enter Canada on the south side (right in the picture) of the canopy, cars and other traffic will enter to the north. Trucks will bypass, as seen here, to the north as they exit the commercial inspection yard to the QEW. Inspection facilities are farther west toward Central Avenue to allow easier access directly off the bridge.

Shared Border Management nothing new in Fort Erie

Free trade/security balance in practice for many years

Shared border management between Canada and the United States, in one form or another, as has been in place for well over a decade in Fort Erie.

In response to the increased need for expedited bi-national trade and heightened security awareness, Canada and the United States signed the Shared Border Accord in 1995 to facilitate trade.

A Commercial Vehicle Processing Centre was constructed on expanded Peace Bridge property soon after.

“Having customs and immigration officials from another country in our own is not unique” says Fort Erie Economic Development & Tourism Corporation General Manager Jim Thibert.

“U.S. Customs officials have manned stations at airports in Canada to pre-clear passengers to the States as they do in many other nations.”

Further initiatives were taken in the wake of 9-11, including steps to pre-clear cargo.

The Peace Bridge and the Thousand Islands Bridge near Kingston were chosen as sites for the latest pilot projects to speed up traffic.

While Canadian officials would work in the U.S. at Thousand Islands, their Customs counterparts in Buffalo would work in Fort Erie to inspect goods and people to the States.

Shared Border Management strategy aims to expand to other ports of entry with Canadians in the U.S. and vice-versa as each location merits.



Land is more available in Fort Erie than in Buffalo and therefore a more sensible location for U.S. Customs to set up full pre-clearance.

The PBA owns 60 acres of land in Fort Erie and only 17 in Buffalo.

“Shared Border Management may better meet long-term border inspection needs while limiting intrusion into surrounding neighborhoods,” said PBA manager Ron Rienas.

Primary and secondary passenger and cargo inspection will take place in the staging yard below Central Avenue in Fort Erie.

The yard was formerly used for the CVPC — which was moved to the Truck and Travel Centre at Gilmore Road and renamed the Pre-Processing Centre to take up less space at the bridge plaza.

The move allowed Canadian shippers to meet new U.S. guidelines for advance notice before getting to the border.

The Government of Canada and the United States committed to the pilot project in December 2004 to implement SBM at the two international bridges.

If successful, SBM may lead to a more certain expansion of bridge capacity.

Plans for Shared Border Management are required to meet U.S. Customs requirements but must also be designed to minimize any negative effects on Fort Erie.

“The PBA is committed to work with the Town to ensure that positive benefits accrue to the residents of Fort Erie,” Mr. Rienas said.

“If any additional land is required to facilitate Shared Border Management every effort will be made to more than compensate and create additional green space, parkland, tree planting, waterfront access, etc., for the benefit of residents and visitors to Fort Erie,” he said.

Decisions relative to implementation of SBM, such as jurisdictional issues and divergent law enforcement practices have yet to be announced so shared border management is a ways off.

Completion of the environmental impact study for a companion bridge awaits final agreement on a Shared Border Management plan.

A jury of technical experts and citizens from Fort Erie and Buffalo paired down 33 options for Peace Bridge expansion to this design. The twin-tower cable stay concept will be incorporated into the environmental impact study for a new bridge. “The design jury was used to determine what the two communities preferred as a bridge type,” said PBA manager Ron Rienas. A decision from the federal governments on implementation of Shared Border Management is the final piece before the EIS can be completed. “They don’t look at the bridge and plaza separately; it’s a package,” he said. It’s hoped that a record of decision — the ultimate green light — from the U.S. Federal Highways Administration can be made by the middle of 2007.



The PBA purchased the coal docks property in 2004 in Bridgeburg as a site for a potential waterfront park.

Plaza to be complete in fall

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construction started in the summer.

That followed closely the April opening of new tollbooths — also transferred from Buffalo to Canada — at the entrance to the Queen Elizabeth Way in Fort Erie.

Tolls in Buffalo were demolished and the duty free shop removed from the middle of the U.S. Plaza to make more room for U.S. commercial vehicle inspection booths.

“There’s been a dramatic impact on trucks and passenger traffic with just the first phase,” Mr. Rienas said. “Queues on the highways have disappeared.”

Throughput capacity for trucks leaving Canada was improved by 75 per cent in the first phase of the project.

Three new U.S. inspection booths have a high window for trucks and a low window for cars allowing them to be opened for either depending on circumstances.

“With the high/low booths, 16 auto primary inspection lanes are available for special events, weekends and holidays,” Mr. Rienas said.

“These are huge benefits for trade, envi-

ronment and public safety,” he said. “We’ll have a much better functioning bridge, a more useful NEXUS lane, easier tourist entry into Canada and expedited trade.”

Representing a canoe as it would be stored on shore, the canopy over inspection facilities will be the centrepiece of a grand gateway into Canada and Fort Erie.

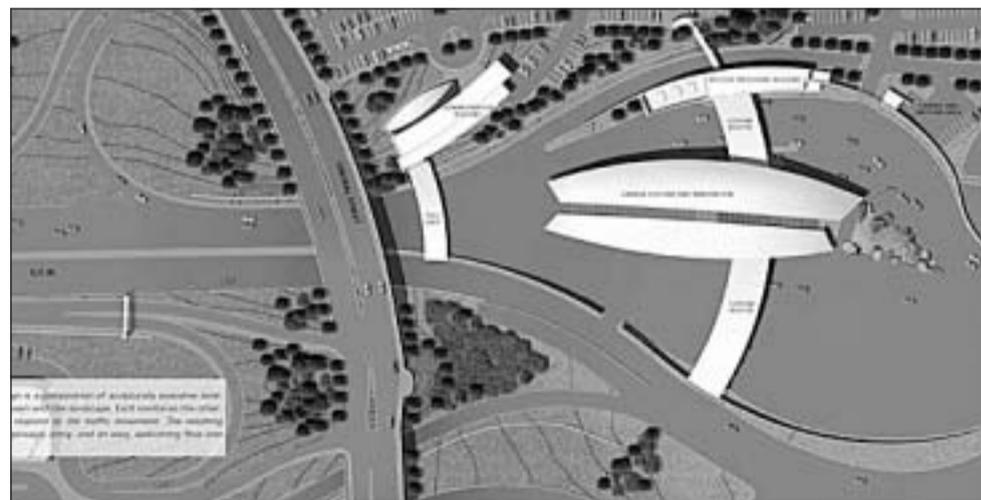
“Landscaping will be reconfigured, woodlots, fountain — it will be nothing short of fantastic,” Mr. Rienas said.

With inspection booths moved away from the bridge, trucks will easily be able to turn into the commercial inspection yard. If there are passenger delays, vehicles will be off the bridge apron as they wait.

The new three-storey PBA building finished with cut stone stands over the plaza near the top of Queen Street.

Administration functions for the Peace Bridge had been done in Buffalo since the bridge’s construction in 1927 but will now be brought over to Fort Erie.

Half the PBA’s 90 employees will work from there and the rest from Customs buildings on both sides of the border and the



The white buildings in the diagram are construction undertaken at the Peace Bridge plaza.

maintenance facility in Canada.

The building will provide 19,500 square feet of space, the new Canadian Customs building 25,000 square feet, not including the area under the canopy, and the new Immigration building 14,000 square feet.

The outer atrium of the main entrance to the administration building will house a gallery featuring pre-European contact aboriginal artifacts found at the site during extensive archaeological excavations the

PBA undertook in the 1990s.

The gallery and interpretive centre is a partnership with the Town of Fort Erie and the Fort Erie Museum Board and will also house contemporary commissioned works by Native artists.

It is called Mewinza (pronounced mawinja), an Anishinawbek word meaning “a long time ago” since studies have determined the site had been inhabited for more than 9000 years.

QEW corridor key to growth and good jobs

There's well over 300 acres of land waiting to be turned into jobs along the QEW between Gilmore and Thompson Roads.

That's the way community and development services director Rino Mostacci describes the Fort Erie Business Park.

"It's a big industrial park," he said. "If we were able to build that out, it would be huge."

After that, there is always the potential to extend it north up the highway then develop down the other side.

"The QEW is really going to be job central in the long, long term," he said.

Ontario's "Places to Grow" policy designates a gateway economic zone through Fort Erie.

The park is formally designated for industrial growth in the new draft official plan for the Town of Fort Erie.

That was identified in 2002 when Mr. Mostacci began the process to achieve readiness for industrial development.

Resolving infrastructure constraints were among the most important factors in freeing up development in this corridor.

The Town's new overall strategy is designed to correct and remediate problems with consideration to long-term development opportunities.

Construction of the Frenchman's Creek trunk sewer is a vital component for shovel-readiness for the park.

But it is only one component: the gamut of services — transportation, drainage, water — and pre-preparation of land for development is being addressed in a master servicing plan.

"It sets the road map for everything — all the servicing and infrastructure needs in that area," said infrastructure services director Ron Tripp.

The first step is the development of an economic impact analysis currently underway.

"We anticipate considerable improvements at Gilmore and complete interchange reconstruction at Bowen and likely a service road between the two," said Mr. Tripp, director of public works.

The Town is prepared to commit finances to that end.

"Storm water management in general will be a huge project to be dealt with," he said.

Typically, individual developments deal with storm water management locally in isolation of other developments.

"We will look at it globally to provide the best solution for the entire area," Mr. Tripp said.

A global storm water management plan helps to illustrate how the Town is working to eliminate uncertainty — another obstacle for developers.

With a master plan in place, the approval process is



streamlined and developers know the hurdles that often impede development have been significantly lowered, if not eliminated.

"Developers hate uncertainty," said Mr. Mostacci. And they don't like long waits for approvals as investment is often very sensitive on time.

"The cornerstone of shovel-ready was the town wide development charges study and bylaw implemented in

2004," he said.

Developers will know exactly how much their investments will cost, but equally important the Town will have the money to invest in public infrastructure.

"It's one thing to say we must invest in infrastructure; it's another to actually have the resources to invest," Mr. Mostacci said, and investors know the difference.

Developers indicated they would pay more for better service, expedited approvals and more certainty.

"The policy is sound," said Mayor Wayne Redekop. "You can't attract business and people unless you've got the infrastructure that will accommodate them."

The better the infrastructure, "the more likely we'll bring industry to the community — and that's been a major focus for us," he said.

The Town is prepared to invest millions of dollars to prepare the park for development.

Approximately \$2 million is earmarked for its share of the \$8-million Frenchman's Creek trunk main construction which is expected to begin this fall.

The Town estimates up to \$10 million for interchange improvements at Gilmore and Bowen Roads and up to \$14 million for internal roads and services to be invested.



Rino Mostacci



Ron Tripp

Niagara Parks Commission Marina

Development of 'fabulous' property being considered

The Fort Erie Economic Development and Tourism Corporation has taken the lead to solicit development proposals for one of the most sought-after water front properties in Ontario.

Proposals to develop the Niagara Parks Commission Marina are being considered by a joint Fort Erie and NPC steering committee under the direction of the EDTC and a final selection will be presented to the NPC on April 21.

The final steering committee evaluation session occurred this week.

"We've proven the value of this property with one of the proposals worth near \$100 million," said EDTC general manager Jim Thibert.

"This is a fantastic piece of property and there is significant interest in developing the site," he said.

With 45 acres of flat land and waterlots stretching along the Niagara Parkway, it is the only marina facility on the Canadian side of the upper Niagara River.

The parks commission will not entertain the outright sale of the property but will enter a long-term lease if a

marina is a primary focus of a development plan and the NPC can realize financial benefits.

"We're looking for something that will be an innovative venture partnership that is sustainable and shared and helps implement our vision for tourism, recreation and residential development," Mr. Thibert said.

The land is underutilized and unappreciated and full of potential for a progressive development, said mayor Wayne Redekop.

"A proposal must be in line with the NPC's goal to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Niagara River Corridor for the enjoyment of visitor, and proposals



Mayor Wayne Redekop sits on the Niagara Parks Commission which will consider a development proposal for its marina on the parkway.

must be acceptable to the Town and in alignment with its economic and tourism strategies," Mr. Redekop said.

A final decision is solely at the discretion of the parks commission.

Peninsula Alloy Inc. moves into Eagle St. plant

Two and two came together for Roger Heise, and he found a great location for his foundry.

Peninsula Alloys will move its entire operation into the former Eagle Castings building on Eagle Street by early fall.

Working out of leased facilities in Thorold, Mr. Heise said he was looking for a larger space to work with heavier and larger products.

"Then this came up and we had a pretty good business case and now we'll move everything into Fort Erie," he said.

His company of 60 people manufactures heavy parts for excavation equipment and proprietary products.

"Everyone with the town and the EDTC have been very open and helpful," he said.

The property requires a lot of cleaning up, and workers have been on site doing that since January.

Mr. Heise intends to increase casting capacity per melt from his current 3,000 pounds to 9,000 pounds per melt once moved into the Eagle Street facility.

His timetable was very quick on the project. Shortly before Christmas 2005 he learned of the location and within a month had purchased the building from the Town.

While he will begin production in the fall, the complete transfer of operations will occur in January 2007.

"Many people worked diligently on the property to get it into a position that Peninsula Alloy could make the purchase," said Jim Thibert, general manager of the Fort Erie Economic Development and Tourism Corporation.

"The Town treasurer, Margaret Neubauer, the Town clerk, Carolyn Kett and their staff cleared all the title issues while the planning department and public works staff processed the physical requirements." Another team effort.

Road project paves way for more growth

Fort Erie's Stevensville Industrial Park will become more attractive to potential industrial interests when reconstruction of Eagle Street is completed this year.

The road will be brought up to industrial standards to accommodate heavy trucks from Zavcor/Truk-King, ACG Canada, DMI Industries and Peninsula Alloys.

The Town of Fort Erie has committed more than \$600,000 for the rehabilitation of this important roadway to support future industrial expansion, development and job growth.

Another signal that Fort Erie is open for business and willing to support investments, the Eagle Street project is critical to the support of development and prosperity in Stevensville and the rest of Fort Erie.

EDTC a success on all fronts, says chairman

The Fort Erie Economic Development and Tourism Corporation has been a success on all fronts, says its chairman.

Herb McGirr, who is general manager of track operations at the Fort Erie Race Track, and has headed the board of directors over the past four years.

On two of the key missions of the EDTC, there has been phenomenal success — retention of existing business and attraction of new business.

"You can take Rich Products and DMI — even if that was all there was to show, it is certainly very significant in facilitating job growth," Mr. McGirr said.

"And that's not all that there was."

A major two-year effort came to fruition in March — the rollout of Fleet Canada and the preservation of Fort Erie as a player in the aerospace industry.

"Not many other communities can say that they saved jobs and created a company through their municipal eco-



Robert Rich, founder and chairman of Rich Products, announced major expansion at the Fort Erie facility in 2003.

Pioneer, visionary passes away

Fort Erie, western New York and the entire global business community lost a pioneering visionary this February, as Robert E. Rich, founder and chairman of Rich Products Corporation passed away peacefully in the company of his loving family at the age of 92.

He is best known as an innovative entrepreneur and the inventor of the world's first, and now famous, non-dairy whipped topping, Rich's Whip Topping

Mr. Rich went on to build and manage what has become

America's largest family owned food-service company.

"Mr. Rich will truly be missed," said Fort Erie EDTC manager Jim Thibert, "but I am confident that his legacy will live on in Fort Erie and beyond."

"I feel honored and privileged to have had the opportunity to meet Mr. Rich, and to have worked with his family and colleagues, through the EDTC, to help support and encourage the organization's expansion efforts at the Fort Erie plant," he said.

People drive customer service

People drive the municipality, and chief administrative officer for the Town of Fort Erie Harry Schlange intends to let employees drive on.

That's his key philosophy in managing, whether in the private or public sector.

Mr. Schlange has worked with many firms in management and consulting, and has also worked with the Region.

What struck him when he first arrived — in Fort Erie — was the level of commitment of the Town's employees across all levels.

"It comes from two things — the natural pride of what they [staff] do and who they do it for," he says.

They do it for the community to which they have strong attachment.



Harry Schlange

timeliness, responsiveness, knowledge and courtesy.

Schlange has lifted the lid and allowed employees "to drive toward council's vision".

"The empirical evidence has shown that where ever you look — public, private — really passionate, happy people are going to drive customer service."

Service is a key mission of Town Council, as identified in the 2004 corporate strategic plan.

There are five things that drive customer satisfaction; outcome, timeliness, responsiveness, knowledge and courtesy.

conomic development program," said McGirr.

And there has been many other successes, big and small, heralded and unheralded, that have been the bread and butter of recent economic growth in Fort Erie.

The EDTC's general manger, Jim Thibert, "is an aggressive guy," Mr. McGirr said. "He's brought home the bacon.

McGirr has no doubt that Rich's was in trouble in Fort Erie, if it could not modernize its local plant. "He stepped in stepped in, got the province involved and now we have expansion there."

While DMI was investigating Fort Erie, "Jim got everyone together, the company, Town, Region, and we paid a lot of attention to what they needed," he said.

"Obviously we're thrilled with what happened and everybody seems to be a little envious about Fort Erie's fortune," he said.

"For as long as I've been around, the kind of effort



Herb McGirr

that has been put forward is simply excellent," he said.

"Where we used to have an adversarial relationship with other cities, Jim knew that making partnerships is better than trying to beat each other over the head," Mr. McGirr said.

"Perhaps one of the most significant changes that have contributed to successful business development in Fort Erie is the way in which we work together with Town departments," he said.

"We are a real team now, each of us knowing the other's strengths and supporting their role in attracting, developing and maintaining relationships in the way businesses can appreciate."

Unique and fun summer festivities in Fort Erie for all

Arts

Rites of Spring

Authors and storytellers from Ontario read and display their work outdoors.

June 10 • Stevensville Conservation Club

For more information call 905-894-4422

Crystal Beach Arts Festival

Artists from the Region and Western New York display their work at a beautiful lake-side location followed by a family musical concert.

June 25 • Crystal Beach Waterfront Park

For more information 905-894-2826

Riverwalk Arts Festival

Held in conjunction with the Riverwalk Music Festival, local and regional artists will display their work outdoors at the Riverwalk Park.

July 15

Arts Council Studio Tour

Artists open their studios for public tours to show their work and demonstrate their skills.

Sept. 23-24 • Various locations.

For more information call 905-894-6556

Binational Doors Open Niagara 2006

Tour architecturally significant and historic locations on both sides of the border

Oct. 14-15

For more information call 1-888-333-1987

Heritage/Culture

Black Heritage Day

Guided tours of Black heritage sites.

Aug. 5 • Riverwalk Park

For more information call 905-871-5833

Pow Wow

Experience Native culture and celebrations.

Aug. 5-6 • FE Native Friendship Centre

For more information call 905-871-8931

Fort Erie Celtic Festival

Pipes, drums and all things Celtic in this authentic festival.

Sept. 9 • Historic Fort Erie

For more information call 905-8905

Heritage Days

Enjoy crafts, heritage displays, food, quilting and children's activities.

Sept. 30

For more information call 905-871-6980

Music

Waterfront Park Concert Series

A season of live concerts featuring a great mix of musical styles for the whole family at Fort Erie's premier waterfront park in Crystal Beach. Shows start at 7 p.m.

May 28, June 25, July 9, July 30, Aug. 13, Aug. 27

Riverwalk Music Festival

Enjoy jazz and blues in support of the Multiple Sclerosis Society in a beautiful riverside venue at Riverwalk Park.

July 14-15

For more information call 905-937-7772

Niagara Symphony at Old Fort Erie

Enjoy an evening of historic music performed by the Niagara Symphony — one of the area's finest musical treasures.

Aug. 4-7 p.m. • Historic Fort Erie

For more information call 905-994-7606

Community

Friendship Festival

Celebrate nearly two centuries of friendship between Canada and the United States in this premier festival featuring big-name concerts, children's performances, curbside vendors and a host of fun for all ages.

June 30-July 2 • Mather Park

For more information call 905-871-6454

Ridgeway Summer Festival

Celebrate summer at this outdoor festival in historic Ridgeway with food, crafts, music and fun for every age.

July 8-9 • Ridgeway

For more information call 905-894-1720

Military

Fenian Raid 140th Anniversary

Re-enactment of the famous 1866 battle fought on Canadian soil that helped shaped a nation.

June 3-4 • Historic Fort Erie

For more information call 905-871-0540

Siege of Fort Erie

Held by American forces during the War of 1812, British forces sieged Fort Erie and launched a bloody assault. Free encampment and battles.

Aug. 12-13 • Historic Fort Erie

French and Indian War

Warriors, marines and rangers will meet on the battlefield in a 1764 re-enactment.

Sept. 2-3 • Historic Fort Erie

For more information call 905-871-0540

Horse racing

Fort Erie Race Track

Horses dash over the local one-mile oval and inside turf Saturdays to Tuesdays all summer and a good part of fall.

Opening Day • April 29

Canada Day • July 1

Bison City Stakes • July 2

Independence Day • July 4

Prince of Wales Stakes • July 16

Other stakes and cup races all season.

April 29-Oct. 31 • 1:05 p.m.

Fitness and Fun

Fort Erie Fitness

5k Run and Fun Walk

Starts and ends at the Fort Erie YMCA.

June 10 • YMCA

Binational Trails Days

Run, bike or walk in the second annual event and discover the wonderful network of trails with a ceremonial kick-off at 9:30 a.m. and a cross border handshake on the Peace Bridge.

June 4 • Mather Park

Done deal.

1-888-270-9151