

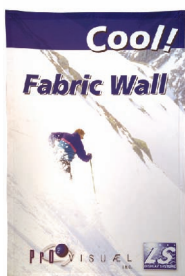
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Dave Willis, President of **Ayr Coach Lines Ltd.** of Waterloo was elected Chair of the **Ontario Motor Coach Association** for 2007 and took over duties January 1. The OMCA is one of Canada's largest and leading travel/tourism trade associations with 1027 corporate members from across Canada and the USA.

Willis was first elected to the OMCA Board in 1999 and has served as Secretary Treasurer and Vice Chair. He has also served on numerous OMCA committees. He will preside over an industry that has seen many ups and downs over the last few years. Fluctuating and rising fuel prices, as well as the high insurance rates of 2004 has put pressure on company profits. Travel and tourism was greatly affected by 9/11 and then by SARS. But the industry is seeing a resurgence in tours and travel to the US because of the change in the value of the dollar. As well, commuter business to and from the GTA is growing and provides a great opportunity for coach companies.

Willis is positive about the industry and looks forward to overseeing it as it meets the challenges of 2007. "Motor coach travel is the safest, environmentally friendly, cost efficient and the most flexible way to travel. With road congestion, concern for the environment, airport inconveniences and pressure on the taxpayers, comfortable motor coach travel is bound to increase," he says.

Ayr Coach Lines has been operated by the Willis Family for over 41 years, serving the Waterloo Region with various types of transportation. Just over a year ago Ayr Coach sold their school bus fleet so they could focus on the motor coach market expanding through-out South Western Ontario and into the State of New York.



Dave Willis

COURTESY OF ONTARIO MOTOR COACH ASSOCIATION

NCR Corporation will move its Waterloo-based manufacturing to a contract manufacturing model as part of the company's strategy to restructure its global operations. The manufacture of NCR's cheque-processing module will be moved to NCR's manufacturing facility in Puducherry, India. The manufacture of automated teller machines (ATMs), self-checkout solutions and payment systems will be outsourced to a leading global contract manufacturer.

The company says approximately 450 manufacturing and operations positions will be eliminated at the Waterloo facility, while more than 275 research and development, product management, marketing and Americas order fulfillment positions will not be impacted by this action, and will continue to support NCR's self-service and payment solutions businesses.

The manufacturing and operations positions will be phased out gradually, with the majority of individuals leaving over the course of 2007.

"This plan represents a difficult but necessary response to evolving market demands," said **Bruce Langos**, senior vice president, global operations, NCR Corporation. "By realigning our manufacturing operations, we can create a level playing field that enables us to become more competitive by freeing up resources to invest in more product innovation and revenue-generating activities, strengthening our competitive position.



Bruce Langos

"This decision does not signal an end to our investment in Waterloo. We are committed to our remaining operations here. However, as with any business, the precise number of employees will continue to fluctuate according to operational needs," Langos said.

Meanwhile, NCR Corporation has announced a software solution to help organizations improve the bottom line through better tracking and management of their assets using radio frequency identification (RFID) or other automatic identification and data collection (AIDC) technologies.

NCR Asset Visibility offers retail, logistics/distribution and manufacturing organizations a single program that enables them to track the location and utilization of all assets. It can be used as a standalone application or it can be integrated with other solutions including enterprise resource planning software and systems that track corporate fixed assets, as well as maintenance and tool crib, warehouse management or manufacturing and quality control systems.



Waterloo's **Conestoga Mall** is undergoing a \$50 million expansion and renovation, scheduled for completion by fall, 2009. **Ivanhoe Cambridge**, owner and manager of Conestoga Mall, says construction will begin this spring.

George Fiddler, Senior Vice President, said, "We are very excited to redevelop Conestoga Mall, a project that is aligned with Ivanhoe Cambridge's strategy of continuously reinvesting in its portfolio to further reinforce the position and profile of its properties in their respective markets."

Sandra Stone, General Manager of Conestoga Mall, said, "This project is excellent news for Conestoga Mall, shoppers, the community and retailers... Renovation work will be planned to minimize inconvenience to our tenants and to continue to provide a shopper-friendly environment to consumers."



Debra Zelisko (left), Karlheinz Kaul and Christian Rummel at the new Siemens Shell Lab.

PHOTO: EXCHANGE MAGAZINE

first half of March

With **Siemens** senior executive management present, **Siemens Hearing Instruments'** President, **Debra Zelisko**, has officially opened the new Siemens Shell Lab at the 24,000 sq. ft. Pinebush Road, Cambridge location. Recently, Siemens completed a \$250,000 project to update their labs; this expands their capacity to strategically embrace their anticipated growth and ensure Siemens' ability to continually provide the highest-quality custom hearing instruments.

Karlheinz Kaul, Group President of Siemens Audiology Group, and **Christian Rummel**, CFO, based out of Erlangen, Germany, joined Zelisko for the ribbon cutting.

"We are pleased to be able to continue our advancements in hearing aid technology through this investment," said Zelisko. "We have positioned Siemens as a leading provider of audiology products for the Canadian marketplace."

As the market leader in innovation, Siemens Hearing Instruments is the only company to offer e2e (ear to ear) wireless technology that enables the right and left hearing aid to communicate with each other, synchronizing hearing aid function, volume control and memory settings. The Shell Lab project also allows Siemens to increase its production of the hearing aid shells, scanned from ear mold impressions completed at remote customer sites, using patented Siemens' iScan technology - detailed and modeled using highly-specialized 3D software, and then produced using multiple Stereo Lithographic Apparatus (SLA) machines.

Research In Motion Limited has announced a change in committee membership arising from the company's management-initiated, voluntary review of stock option grants. A statement from RIM said, "In light of the comprehensive nature of the Company's management-initiated, voluntary internal review of stock options, including the past and future role of the Compensation Committee of the Board of Directors in

A new book by **Exchange Magazine** editor **Paul Knowles** will be published in March. "**Escaping Eden**," Knowles' third humorous garden book, will be launched at events in Stratford, New Hamburg and Toronto during the

respect of stock option grants, the audit committee believes it is important that the internal review not only be objective in fact, but also be perceived by RIM's stakeholders as being objective. These goals may be hindered if members of the Audit Committee who are also members of the Compensation Committee are involved in the deliberations relating to the internal review. As a result, **Dr. Douglas Wright** and **Mr. Kendall Cork**, have decided to recuse themselves from the Audit Committee's future deliberations relating to the internal review. Dr. Wright and Mr. Cork will continue to be active in all matters relating to the Audit Committee other than the deliberations with respect to the ongoing review. **Mr. Jim Estill** and **Mr. John Richardson**, independent members of RIM's Board of Directors who have not been and are not currently members of the Compensation Committee, will continue to supervise the internal review."

Open Text Corporation, the largest independent provider of Enterprise Content Management software and solutions, has announced that its FirstClass Division has entered into a partnership with **Hayes e-Government Resources Inc.**, provider of information technology services and solutions to State of Florida government agencies, local governments, school districts and commercial businesses, to provide hosted email services nationally.

The **Kitchener Waterloo Symphony** has invited **Edwin Outwater** to be its new Music Director. Outwater, who recently concluded his tenure as Resident Conductor of the **San Francisco Symphony**, has accepted a four-year contract with the KWS which begins with the 2007-08 season. He has also agreed to serve as Artistic Advisor for the coming season.


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Edwin Outwater

The Symphony also announced a four-year sponsorship from the **BMO Financial Group** toward the role of Music Director.

"The appointment of this outstanding conductor and musician is an exciting milestone for the Symphony," said **Robert Astley**, Chair of the KWS Board. "We have every confidence that Edwin is fully capable of leading KWS to new artistic heights and to contribute to a renewal of the community excitement and attendance at orchestra events."

Cash-strapped governments across Canada need to encourage private investment in water and wastewater systems if the nation wants to better protect public health and the environment, urges a new report from **The Fraser Institute**, an independent research organization with offices across Canada.

While the exact number of Canadian communities with substandard water and wastewater systems is unknown, problems across the country have been well documented, says the report, **Water and Wastewater Treatment in Canada: Tapping into Private-Sector Capital, Expertise, and Efficiencies**. The report points out that the failure of Canadian water systems is due primarily to the age of the systems, a growing population that exceeds the capacity of the systems, poor management and ill-trained staff, lax regulation, and a lack of capital and operating funds. The estimated cost for maintaining, refurbishing, and expanding Canada's water and wastewater infra-

structure in the coming decades could be as much as \$90 billion.

The new community centre in Breslau is becoming a reality. **Safety-Kleen Canada** is donating \$75,000 towards the project. "The residents of Breslau, along with local businesses and our Public Liaison Committee, have been very supportive of Safety-Kleen over the years as we expanded and upgraded our operations," says **Dale MacIntyre**, VP of Canadian Refinery Operations at Safety-Kleen. "The Breslau Community Centre provides an ideal opportunity for us to give back to the community, and we are very pleased to make a significant multi-year commitment to this project."

Safety-Kleen has operated in Breslau since 1987, and currently employs 125 people at the Breslau location. The company is a subsidiary of Safety-Kleen Systems Inc. of Plano Texas, with 4,500 employees worldwide. Safety-Kleen is North America's premier provider of world-class waste management, oil collection and re-refining and industrial cleaning services.

MacIntyre has issued a challenge to other local businesses to get involved in the campaign. "It's important for companies to give back to the communities in which we and our employees live and work. Chemtura's donation to the Woolwich facility was an inspiration for us... we hope our donation will spur other organizations to consider what they can do to make a difference." (Chemtura, formerly Crompton, made a large donation to the Woolwich multi-use facility in November.)

The "Fit for the Future" campaign is raising funds for four community projects. In addition to the Breslau community centre, there will be new community centres in Maryhill and Conestogo, and the multi-use Woolwich Memorial Centre located in Elmira.

Former Woolwich Mayor **Bob Waters** is Campaign Chair, Deputy Chair is Fran Hatherton. Local residents **Dale and Christine Mortimer** are Co-Chairs of the Breslau campaign.

Safety-Kleen has also been honoured for environmental achievements. The company, Canada's largest used motor oil re-refiner and collector of used oil, used oil filters and industrial solvents, has won the Recycling Council of Ontario's Platinum Sustainable Technology Award for its used motor oil re-refining operations in Breslau.

Bingemans, owner and operator of **Bingemans Big Splash**, the largest water park in southwestern Ontario, has announced a major expansion in time for the summer season.

Bingemans is building four new giant water slides. **The Cyclone** is a high-octane ride sure to get the adrenaline flowing, while **Torpedo Bay** pits three friends in a slippery, watery race to the



finish line as each bombs through a separate AquaTube slide towards a wild, splashy finish. Each of the three slides in the Torpedo Bay complex takes a unique course of curves and spirals before the drop-off.

"Our newest slides are the same as those drawing huge crowds at world-class international water parks. They are guaranteed to seriously increase the fun quotient at Big Splash," says Bingemans General Manager **Mark Bingeman**.


River Run Centre in Guelph has hired **Colleen Clack** as General Manager; she began her duties in early February. Clack succeeds **Rob Mackay**, General Manager from 1999 to 2007, who was appointed Manager of Recreation and Culture in August, 2006.

As River Run Centre manager, Clack will oversee the operations and programming of the Centre. Guelph Mayor **Karen**



Colleen Clack

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Farbridge said, "The River Run Centre is a vital part of our community and I am confident that Colleen Clack's strong background and expertise will help to move the facility forward."

Clack is currently Manager of Performing Arts at the **Living Arts Centre** in Mississauga. She is a graduate of the **University of Waterloo** where she majored in Music and Arts Administration.

Linamar Corporation has confirmed it is the purchaser of the '**Imperial Tobacco**' property at 107 Woodlawn Road in Guelph, and has announced that SYNEX Canada Limited (nee EMJ) will purchase the Woodlawn Road property from Linamar Corporation.

"We were interested in this property from the beginning," stated **Jim Estill**, CEO of **SYNEX Canada Limited**. "We were involved in the bidding process but eventually Linamar Corporation was the successful purchaser of the property. We

advised Linamar at that time that we were still interested in leasing part of the property, should that option become available."

Linamar entered the bidding process for the property at

Woodlawn Road in an attempt to secure a potential site for its future research and development centre last summer, but toward the end of 2006 and into 2007 determined that this was not the ideal site to house the new centre and has since entered into an arrangement with SYNEX to purchase the surplus property after the Linamar sale is closed.



Jim Estill

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"Linamar has a firm deal with Imperial Tobacco and, of course, intends to fully honour that deal and purchase the property," stated **Jim Jarrell**, Linamar's President and Chief Operating Officer. "However, after reassessing our business needs and given SYNEX's previous interest in the property, we decided to make an arrangement whereby SYNEX would ultimately become the owner of the property once our sale with 'Imperial Tobacco' closed. This solution will be a great one for all involved and ensure the property remains used, viable and vital in the City of Guelph."

Max Blouw, a key member of the senior administrative team who has been instrumental in the success story that is the **University of Northern British Columbia**, has been named the next president of Wilfrid Laurier University. "This is a momentous day for Laurier," said board of governors chair Beverly Harris. "Dr. Blouw was the unanimous choice of the selection committee, and we are totally confident that under his leadership, Laurier will be able to take advantage of the many opportunities open to us as we approach and celebrate our centenary in 2011."

Blouw will complete his second term as vice president of research at the UNBC in June and will begin a five-year term at Laurier in September.

"Laurier has grown vigorously over the past decade under Dr. Bob Rosehart's outstanding leadership," Blouw said. "The university is positioned to finish its first century of operations as a very successful undergraduate institution. I believe it will enter a new century of operations as a comprehensive university with a clearly defined identity and



Max Blouw

niche among the other Ontario and Canadian universities."

Com Dev International will add 38,000 sq. ft. to its Cambridge facility. Half the \$4 million addition will be labs, the remainder R&D and other uses.

For the third consecutive year, **Sun Life Financial Inc.** was named one of the **Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World**. Announced at the **World Economic Forum** in Davos, Switzerland, the listing ranks corporations by analyzing extra-financial drivers of risk and shareholder value.

"Once again, Sun Life Financial is proud to be named one of the 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World," said **Donald A. Stewart**, CEO, Sun Life Financial. "This honour reflects our ability to create shareholder value while recognizing the important social, environmental and corporate governance context in which we operate internationally." Sun Life Financial is one of only five Canadian corporations named to the Global 100 list, and has maintained its position since the ranking's inception in 2005.

Jim Kilgour, of Advanced Benefits Consulting has been designated a Certified **Employee Benefits Specialist** by the **International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans** and Dalhousie University, and is a member of the 2006 class of graduates. Kilgour, of Kitchener, qualified for the designation by passing a series of examinations covering the required subjects relating to the employee benefits field and by meeting and attesting to high standards of business and professional conduct.

Gore Mutual Insurance Company of Cambridge has donated \$1 million to their charitable Foundation. **The Gore Mutual Foundation** was established to support worthwhile causes in the communities where Gore Mutual's brokers and policyholders live. The Foundation works closely with local independent insurance brokers to

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determine ways in which they can make a difference.

"One of Gore Mutual's core values is to support the communities in which we operate," says Kevin McNeil, President and CEO of Gore Mutual. "Our brokers are leaders in supporting worthwhile causes in their communities and we are pleased to help them in their efforts."

In 2006, Gore Mutual made donations to over 130 organizations.

International human resources firm **Hewitt Associates** has announced that for the fourth consecutive year **The Co-operators** is on the firm's list of the "50 Best Employers in Canada." The Co-operators, based in Guelph, is ranked No. 20, up from No. 25 last year. The rankings are based on levels of staff engagement – the measure of employees' emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization they work for, measured through confidential employee surveys.

"What makes the '50 Best Employers in Canada' list so meaningful is that it is the employees themselves who rank their employers," said **Kathy Bardswick**, president and CEO of The Co-operators.

The United Way of Guelph and Wellington has begun to allocate funding to local, community based agencies. As a result of their successful 2006 **Close the Gap** campaign which raised more than \$2.5 million dollars, fifty agencies and over eighty community-based programs are receiving funding this year.

The Co-operators in 2006 made a record donation of more than \$446,500 to the **United Way**. Staff members contributed the majority of the funds, which

will be used in the communities where the donations were made. "The generosity of our staff members is nothing short of astonishing," said **Kathy Bardswick**, president and CEO of The Co-operators. "I am so proud of this organization, and the sense of community that is so prevalent in our offices across the country."

In addition to the money raised, The Co-operators also provided a Loaned Representative – a staff member seconded on a full-time basis for the duration of the fifteen-week campaign – to assist with fundraising in Guelph.

A longstanding supporter of the incredible music talent in our region, **The Beat Goes On** is organizing a two day



GO! Music Festival March 9 & 10, 2007

live music festival Friday, March 9 and Saturday, March 10, in Uptown Waterloo. Over 30 bands will be playing in **The Heather, Jane Bond, Starlight, Fox & Fiddle** and the **Duke of Wellington**. Tickets and weekend passes will be sold in advance at The Beat Goes On. Tickets will also be sold at the door. See beatgoeson.com.

Four young entrepreneurs topped a field of 44 competitors to win the 2007 **iGNITION** \$1K business-pitch competition, Friday Jan. 12 at **Wilfrid Laurier University**. Participants had 90 seconds each to present their business ideas to a panel of judges. The top three walked away with \$1,000 each. The winners were:

- **Greg Overholt**, a student at WLU pitched his plans for Hybrid Projections, which creates projection products to help clients communicate ideas.

- **Christine Robinson**, an alumna of WLU, and Christie Penner Worden pitched The Nesting Place, a full-service resource centre and meeting place for new parents.

- **Jennifer Yorke**, a UW student, presented SimplyStyle.com, an online service providing personal clothing suggestions and to link clients to retailers.

"The judges had a challenge choosing among the excellent pitches this year. This is a key step for all these

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entrepreneurs to actually start their businesses and compete for funds as part of the **LaunchPad \$50K** program this spring," said **Steve Farlow**, executive director of **Laurier's Schlegel Centre for Entrepreneurship**.

The LaunchPad \$50K Venture Creation Competition, which runs in May, is a platform designed to develop and encourage entrepreneurs in Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph. Started in 2004 by Wilfrid Laurier University and the **University of Waterloo**, LaunchPad \$50K has grown to include Conestoga College and the **University of Guelph**. For more information, visit: www.launchpad50k.ca.

Mike Johnston and several of his employees merged their Accounting, Valuation and Tax practice with **PricewaterhouseCoopers** effective January 1, 2007. **Dennis Grimm**, City Leader for the PwC Waterloo-Wellington Regional Office said, "We are delighted that Mike and several of his colleagues have merged their prac-



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tice with PwC's. They will significantly enhance the resources and commitment we have for the Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge-Guelph private entrepreneurial market."

During a year when Ontario had a 255% jump in new, energy efficient homes, **Reid's Heritage Homes**, with ENERGY STAR qualified homes in London, Kitchener, Guelph and Port Elgin, won **EnerQuality's Technical Excellence Award**. The EnerQuality Awards of Excellence ceremony, held January 12 in Markham in conjunction with the **Ontario Building & Renovation Forum**, recognized outstanding building professionals, industry partners and homebuilders for advancing energy efficiency in new home construction.

TechTown, the community amenities complex in the **University of Waterloo Research & Technology Park**, opened its doors January 12. TechTown supports the health and wellness of the high tech population within the Research Park, neighbouring technology companies as well as the faculty and staff at the University of Waterloo.

The **University of Guelph's** Board of Governors has reappointed **Alastair Summerlee** as president, extending his term to 2013. Summerlee, U of G's seventh president, was first appointed in 2003.

The membership of the new **Centre Block Evaluation Committee**, including four citizen advisors, was approved by Kitchener City Council. The

Committee will review, evaluate and shortlist the three redevelopment proposals the City has received for the block and, it is anticipated, ultimately recommend the successful redevelopment project to Council. Citizen advisors include: **Brian Bennett**, vice-president with **TD Bank** in downtown Kitchener; **Rick Haldenby**, director and associate professor at the **University of Waterloo School of Architecture**; **Donald Zehr**, president of **Zevest Development Corporation** and a local developer of commercial properties; and **Reinhold Schuster**, Professor Emeritus of Structural Engineering at the **University of Waterloo**. The citizen advisors will be joined on the committee by senior City staff.

ATS Automation Tooling Systems Inc. of Cambridge is reducing its **Automation Systems Group** workforce in North America. The rationalization will reduce ASG employment by approximately 180 in North America (7% of the ASG global workforce), with approximately 100 positions impacted in Cambridge. As a result, estimated severance and related costs of approximately \$5 million are expected to be expensed during the fourth quarter of fiscal 2007 (three months ended March 31, 2007). The workforce rationalization is expected to decrease ATS's annualized payroll costs by an estimated \$11 million pre-tax.

"The decision to further streamline our operations and reduce the costs of underutilized capacity was arrived at carefully, giving full consideration to our strategic roadmap, our long-term prospects and the need to reallocate resources to high opportunity markets,"

said **Jim Sheldon**, President ASG North America.

Cambridge's **Future Inns** business hotel and conference centre has opened; a media release states it has been developed in response to Waterloo Region's business growth, providing the inbound corporate traveller with "the area's first premium full service business hotel."

The state of the art property features extensive conference and meeting facilities and 138 business rooms and suites, including an executive floor. Future Inns has the highest level of technology throughout the facility, including wired and wireless high-speed internet, flat screen and plasma televisions, advanced multimedia and a fully equipped business centre with remote



printing, copier, scanner and fax.

Future Inns is also the first 100% non smoking hotel in the area, and has a fully equipped fitness facility. It is also the first hotel in the region to have a professional interactive golf simulator.

The facility is home to "The Bruce Fine Dining Restaurant and Lounge," offering the business guest a place to entertain clients or work independently in the lounge while enjoying fine food and beverages.



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

continued from page 46

moved to its current location on Riverbend Drive.

Conestoga College remains a key partner. President John Tibbits told Exchange, "Skills Canada does valuable and important work, advancing awareness about the opportunities and rewards that flow from education and careers in trades and technology. Our current and future prosperity as a nation depends on our skills and productivity in a competitive world. Skills Canada challenges young Canadians to gain technical knowledge, apply it effectively, aim for the highest standards and discover their own abilities and potential. That is a recipe for personal, economic and societal success."

Skills Canada – Ontario brings together an effective partnership of private industry, senior levels of government, school boards and community colleges. Vic Degutis, CAO, Resource Development Office of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board is the current Chair of the Board. "This is really an idea whose time has come," Degutis says. "There is a skills shortage coming and this is our best defence against it."

He adds that Skills Canada representatives visited 3500 classrooms across Ontario last year carrying the message that skilled trades provide satisfying, well-paid careers that are open to both young men and women and provide viable alternatives to university education.

Degutis also sings the praises of Executive Director Gail Smyth and her staff, noting that "Gail's ability as a leader is key to our success."

Dennis Watson, Vice President and General Manager of CTV Southwestern Ontario is a community college graduate and an enthusiastic board member of Skills Canada – Ontario.

"Gail and her staff are doing an outstanding job helping students, parents, teachers and guidance counsellors understand that every student deserves a chance at post-secondary training that will lead to a meaningful career both for them and society. While we need doctors and lawyers, the people who build the courthouses and hospitals are just as important and are needed just as much," Watson says.

A centre-piece of the program is the Technical Skills Competitions that operate at local, provincial, national



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Vic Degutis, Chair of the Board, Skills Canada - Ontario.

“There is a skills shortage coming and this is our best defence against it.”
- VIC DEGUTIS

and international levels. Last year more than 600 students participated in the Waterloo Region competitions and more than 1000 in the Ontario Technological Skills Competition to be held this year from April 30 through May 2 at RIM Park in Waterloo.

St. Mary's Catholic High School student Jason Voll (IT Office Software Applications) is one of three Ontario students advancing to the World Skills Competition in November 2007 in Namuzo City, Japan.

Through this unique partnership of corporations, educational institutions, government agencies and hundreds of volunteers, a recipe has been created to head off a skilled trades shortage by helping Skills Canada - Ontario fulfill its mission: “To champion and stimulate the development of world class technological and employability skills in Ontario youth.”

Readers wanting more information about Skills Canada - Ontario can visit www.skillsontario.com or contact Gail Smyth at gails@skillscanada.com. 

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A recipe for success

Skills Canada is our secret weapon helping defend against a pending shortage of skilled trades

BY BRIAN HUNSBERER



Gail Smyth, Executive Director Skills Canada - Ontario.

The adage “Go west young man” has now been broadened to include not only young women but aging boomers as well. Stories abound about abundant employment opportunities in Alberta. A joke suggests that Calgary’s streets could be paved with gold if only a crew was available to do the job! Alberta’s growth seems constrained only by its labour shortage.

Here in Canada’s Technology Triangle a similar challenge of affluence looms. Our local economy is strong and growing rapidly. “But we need to develop and recruit talented people if our prosperity is to continue,” warns Todd Letts, CEO of the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.

Letts refers to a study undertaken for the Waterloo-Wellington Training and Adjustment Board by University of Waterloo Economist Larry Smith. Smith cautions that increasing competition from places like Alberta and the US combined with the retirement of those in the baby boom generation could lead to a significant labour shortage very soon. This is especially the case in the skilled trades that include a

wide variety of vocations ranging from traditional construction and manufacturing trades to information technology support, computer aided design and robotics as well as vehicle and machine maintenance and personal services like the culinary arts and hair dressing.

Fortunately, one of the solutions to this pending shortage lies in our own back yard. Since 1988, Skills Canada has been actively promoting career opportunities in the trades among young people in creative ways. The national organization is now called Skills Compétences Canada, but the Ontario chapter is the original and by far the largest of the provincial affiliates. The head office is located at 630 Riverbend Drive, Kitchener.

Skills Canada started Barrie in 1988. The Simcoe County Board of Education decided to evaluate its high school technology programs and Orillia high school technology teacher Ray Keery was seconded to undertake this task. At a conference in Las Vegas he connected with the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA). He attended their national skills competition and came away with the dream of starting a similar organization in Canada.

Keery subsequently spoke to the Barrie Manufacturers Association (BMA) and several BMA members became involved in promoting the skilled trades as attractive career options for high school students.

At the same time 13 Community Industrial Training Committees (CITC) were operating across Ontario, and Barrie area Member of Parliament, Edna Anderson, chaired a Local Federal Advisory Committee to recommend how unemployment insurance dollars were spent.

After a VICA representative visited Barrie in 1988 it was decided to start a similar Canadian organization under the name Skills Canada. A year later it became a separate legal entity. Despite its name, it was initially Ontario-based and did not become a national agency until 1991.

One of the agency’s initial functions was to hold local technological skills competitions to select students to participate in the American competition sponsored by VICA. Ten Simcoe County students attended the VICA competition in Tulsa, Oklahoma in June, 1989. Similar competitions were organized in several counties across Ontario and formal partnerships were established with community colleges.

Conestoga College was one of these, becoming an enthusiastic partner in Skills Canada. In December, 1997, the Skills Canada office was moved from Barrie to Conestoga College in Kitchener to benefit from this partnership and be closer to its growing constituency. The office subsequently

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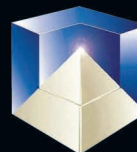
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