



PETER LEE, RECORD STAFF

Bedding products company to expand at new location

MATT WALCOFF

RECORD STAFF

January 26, 2008

CAMBRIDGE

Waterloo Region's hard-hit manufacturing sector is getting a dose of good news with the ambitious expansion of a Cambridge bedding-products company.

Bursting at the seams in its current location, Natura World Inc. is planning to move into the former Ventrtech Ltd. plant on Mitten Court in Hespeler.

Business is thriving at the 13-year-old company, which makes high-end and organic mattresses, pillows and comforters.

Natura World is reaping benefits from the recent trend for products perceived as environmentally friendly, said Ralph Rossdeutscher, the company's president and co-founder.

Employment has nearly doubled to 90 workers over the past year.

"We've just been going a little nutty," Rossdeutscher said. "The growth is quite substantial for us right now."

Natura World, now on Pinebush Road, bought the 141,132-square-foot building for \$5.5 million, according to real estate agent Michael Rouse of CB Richard Ellis Ltd.

Natura World has actually been leasing the Mitten Court building from Ventrtech since December, when it moved pillow production into the former auto parts plant.

The company should finish the move by early spring.

Natura World is still hiring people to sew fabric, among other jobs.

Rossdeutscher says he has "absolutely no clue" when employment will plateau. Staffing levels may depend on just how fast sales continue to grow.

"If we don't do well, we'll be doubling in size," he said, referring to production levels. "If we do well, it could be triple."

Mitten Industries Ltd. opened the Hespeler factory in the late 1980s to build plastic auto parts.

Ventra Group Inc., Ventrtech's parent company, bought Mitten Industries in 1990 and installed metal-stamping presses in 2000.

Ventrtech operated the presses until 2005, when it put 150 people out of work by closing the factory.

Nearby residents said their homes throbbed with the noise coming from the stamping equipment.

After the plant closed, Cambridge council banned any future stamping at the plant; it partially reversed the ban after Ventrtech complained to the Ontario Municipal Board.

City Coun. Rick Cowsill, who represents Hespeler, said he's happy the plant's new owner will be engaged in a relatively quiet form of manufacturing.

"It's a win-win obviously for the city, for the neighbourhood and, eventually, for some new employment," he said.

Natura World might not be the only manufacturer planning to expand in Cambridge.

On Wednesday, John Tennant of the Canada's Technology Triangle economic development agency told Cambridge council to expect a European auto parts maker to announce new jobs in the city.

Both items are welcome news for the local manufacturing industry, which continues to face challenges from the strong Canadian dollar, imperiled U.S. economy and imports from the Far East.

Rossdeutscher is well aware of the dangers. Last year, another company he ran, hole-punch maker Performance Assembly Inc., shut down due to the inability to compete with cheap Chinese imports.

But for the manufacture of specialized products, there is no better place than Cambridge, he said.

"Why expand locally? Because I live here," he said. "The Canadian market is still competitive when it comes to your cost base, even with employees, because when you go to the U.S., you've got health-care costs and everything else. And Cambridge is a great hub for transportation."

Rossdeutscher and his father, Harry, started Natura World in 1994, four years after they launched the hole-punch business.

Harry Rossdeutscher had found the beds for sale in Canada inferior to what was available in Germany. He and Ralph began the new company to make and sell European-style slat beds.

Natura World has since broadened its product line to include latex and foam mattresses, air beds, pillows, comforters, mattress pads, crib accessories and pet beds.

mwalcoff@therecord.com

The **R**ecord.com

<http://news.therecord.com/Business/article/300554>



© Copyright 2007 Metroland Media Group Ltd. All rights reserved. The reproduction, modification, distribution, transmission or republication of any material from www.thespec.com is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Metroland Media Group Ltd.

