



RichmondHill Business Connections

Your source for economic development news in Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill Office of Economic Development

Spring/Summer 2009

RichmondHill
educated dynamic sustainable

• **Page 2** Open for Business /
Branham 300

• **Page 3** Richmond Hill
Company Profiles

• **Page 4** Dispelling the Myths / Small
Business Enterprise Centre

A Message from the Mayor



Mayor Dave Barrow

On behalf of Council, I'm pleased to present the first issue of the Town of Richmond Hill's *Business Connections*. As a former business owner myself, I know that developing strong connections is critical for today's businesses. We hope this newsletter will help establish and facilitate such connections in our business community.

Today's economy has become increasingly competitive and companies are forced to adapt to the changing times now more than ever before. *Business Connections* aims to keep our businesses informed of economic development news, while also providing helpful information.

Lately, negative economic news has dominated headlines, often overshadowing the businesses that are succeeding. In this newsletter, we will hear about two businesses in Richmond Hill that have seen opportunity amidst these difficult times and that have been able to take advantage of it.

As a Town, one of our greatest assets is our business community. It's making things happen in Richmond Hill. To learn more about our Office of Economic Development and how it can assist you, I encourage you to get connected and visit its Website at www.richmondhillonline.com. Enjoy this inaugural issue!

Yours in business,
Dave Barrow, Mayor

Take Advantage of an Untapped Resource

Richmond Hill's recent immigrants are a huge talent pool just waiting to be hired

The statistics tell the story.

According to a recent study by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities,* the percentage of recent immigrants in York Region between the ages of 25 and 54 with a post-secondary degree or diploma was nearly twice that of non-immigrants in 2006. Despite that, the unemployment rate for this group was nearly three times that of non-immigrants.

It is a reality that there are many barriers that exist for recent immigrants entering the workforce. There are solutions, though. Organizations like the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) have been created to help bridge the gap between businesses and recent immigrants.

"TRIEC provides tools businesses can use to help recruit, retain and promote skilled immigrants," says Akash Mahajan, TRIEC's

*FCM study: *Immigration & Diversity in Canadian Cities*

Manager of Corporate and Stakeholder Relations in York Region. With the country's sixth-highest number of total immigrant landings in 2006, businesses in York Region have an exciting opportunity to develop a talented global workforce.

Internships allow employers to test the waters with skilled immigrants, while mentoring helps employees build their leadership and cross-cultural skills. Other programs give human resource professionals or smaller companies the knowledge and ability to successfully screen and hire immigrants.

"We have to compete with the whole world for that talent and, the sooner we increase our capacity to deal with international talent, the better." Akash Mahajan.



Many companies in Richmond Hill and York Region have already participated and benefited from TRIEC and partner programs, which include:

Career Bridge

Career Bridge connects companies with qualified, experienced and job-ready professionals, while minimizing recruitment risks and payroll costs for employers. www.careerbridge.ca

The Mentoring Partnership

The Mentoring Partnership provides new immigrants in York Region with the connections and knowledge of the Canadian workplace they need. www.thementoringpartnership.com

hireimmigrants.ca Roadmap

The hireimmigrants.ca Roadmap is a free, online resource to help employers hire and integrate skilled immigrants. www.hireimmigrants.ca/roadmap

Workshops for Employers

TRIEC hosts How-To HR workshops for York Region employers. These workshops are designed for anyone with hiring responsibilities and links employers to local job developers who will connect them directly to pre-screened skilled immigrant candidates.

For more information about TRIEC, visit www.triec.ca or call (905) 752-1091.

Open for Business: Headford and Barker Business Parks

Whether you're an existing Richmond Hill business looking to expand or are interested in becoming a member of the Town's business community, new employment lands in the Barker and Headford Business Park are open for business! Strategically located along the Highway 404 corridor, the Business Parks provide a supply of employment lands to accommodate a growing demand. The following are some of the businesses that now call these parks home.



Cosmo Music has grown from a small retail store on Yonge Street to realizing a vision of creating Canada's most exciting and interactive music environment with the creation of a musical instrument superstore. To learn more about Cosmo Music, please visit www.cosmomusic.ca.

"Cosmo Music has been a proud member of the Richmond Hill community for more than 35 years and we continually strive to provide its residents with professional music education, quality musical instrument sales and top notch instrument repairs." MARK HEBERT, PRESIDENT & CEO, COSMO MUSIC



BMW Group Canada has outgrown their existing facility and will be relocating their Canadian corporate headquarters in Richmond Hill. The new facility will accommodate the company and its associates and will be built to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. To learn more about BMW, please visit www.bmwgroup.ca.

"We are looking forward to calling Richmond Hill home for our new corporate headquarters. Our new, state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly facility reflects our commitment to sustainability, one of the core values of the BMW brands, and we know this is shared by the Town of Richmond Hill." CHRISTIAN FEILMEIER, VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION, BMW GROUP CANADA



ASH CITY® WORLDWIDE



The corporate headquarters of Ash City, a North American leader in the manufacture, sale and distribution of in-stock, corporate casual apparel is a new member of the Headford Business Park. The brand new 285,000-square foot facility houses the company's entire inventory, a state-of-the-art, pack and ship operation, full service embroidery and a corporate office. You can find more about Ash City at www.ashcity.com.

"The improved facility and its capabilities represents the new Ash City and will allow our company to service our customers better than anyone else in the industry." GARRY HURVITZ, PRESIDENT & CEO, ASH CITY



For more information about employment land opportunities in the Town, please contact our Office of Economic Development, at ecdev@richmondhill.ca.

Branham300: Tech Presence in Richmond Hill

In April, technology leaders converged on the Sheraton Parkway North in Richmond Hill to hear the latest news in the Information Technology (IT) sector, as presented by the Branham Group and their annual Branham300 listing. The Branham300 offers readers a snapshot of Canadian IT trends by providing a listing of Canada's top performing technology companies ranked by revenue.

Despite increasing economic pressures, the Canadian IT elite experienced an 18 per cent growth this past year, as indicated by the Branham Group. The 2009 results show that the Information Communications and Technology sector in Richmond Hill is strong and performing well!



Congratulations to the following Richmond Hill companies for earning a spot on the Branham300 Top Canadian Tech Companies:

Compugen	www.compugen.com
FlexITy Solutions	www.flexity.ca
Visual Defence	www.visualdefence.com
Xenos Group	www.xenos.com
PCI Geomatics	www.pcigeomatics.com
Locus Systems	www.locussystems.com

**RICHMOND HILL
COMPANY PROFILE:**

Dominion Customs Consultants Inc.

It is no secret that Canada relies on imported goods as a key driver of its economy. With a background in customs consulting, co-founder Arthur Briggs, learnt that navigating the customs process, including the payment of duties, is a critical yet often misunderstood component of the importing process. This observation led Briggs, along with President John Preston to create Dominion Customs Consultants Inc.

Founded in 1981 by John Preston and Arthur Briggs, Dominion's success has allowed them to expand from three to more than 25 employees out of its Canadian head office located in the Beaver Creek Business Park. Dominion cites a convenient location for its staff and access to major transportation corridors as strategic advantages of doing business in Richmond Hill.

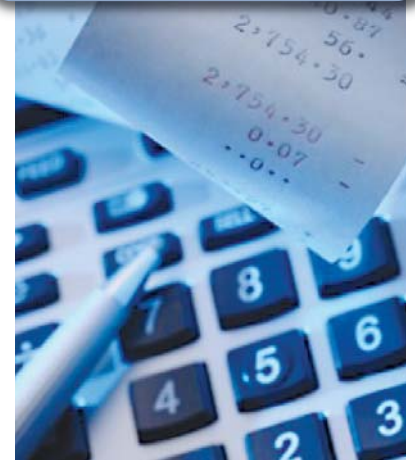
Since its inception, Dominion has seen a lot of changes in the trade industry. Briggs explains

that, in 1981, trade policies were often viewed as protectionist. Now the world is more open to trade and it is seen as an important part of a competitive economy. Trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have played an important role in breaking down the barriers to trade.

In addition to changes in economic policy, advancements in technology have also facilitated trade. For example, there was a time when freight going through customs needed to be manually counted. Thanks to advancements in technology, the Internet and automation processes, companies in this sector are able to review clients' documents and conduct business more efficiently. Dominion's success has allowed them to branch into other value added areas, as well, such as sales tax consulting, freight and courier consulting, trade security and customs compliance.



www.dominiongroup.com



For more information, contact John Preston, President at jpreston@dominiongroup.com.

**RICHMOND HILL
COMPANY PROFILE:**

FouFou Dog

Combining her entrepreneurship skills and love of dogs, Richmond Hill resident Cheryl Ng tapped into a niche market, quickly being recognized as an industry leader in dog clothing and accessories.

When Cheryl came up with the idea to make and sell fashionable clothing and accessories for dogs, many people were skeptical, yet she persevered. Today, you can find FouFou Dog products in many of Canada's largest pet store retailers around the world! Cheryl states that owners have a strong bond with their dogs and often think of them as family members. Purchasing fashionable clothing and accessories is another way that owners express their strong sentimental attachment to their dogs.

Cheryl's first-hand experience in the retail and sales industry has taught her many valuable lessons that have helped her succeed in the world of business. Cheryl explains that using low cost, effective marketing techniques to promote her

business has paid significant dividends and creating and distributing a media release is a very effective way of gaining exposure for your business. FouFou Dog has been featured in many pet magazines and most recently was ranked as one of Canada's top 50 emerging companies by Profit magazine.

Cheryl also recognizes the importance of branding her products. Cheryl explains, "Branding is crucial. The important thing to keep in mind is that branding must temporarily take a back seat when starting up a company. Build a strong foundation first, then concentrate on promoting it."

Cheryl's drive, energy and business knowledge has taken FouFou Dog from an idea to a recognized leader in the industry. Her advice to anyone starting a business is "Always do your research. Know your industry, and know your competitors. Figure out how to differentiate yourself from the



www.foufoudog.com



Pictured: FouFou Dog CEO, Cheryl Ng

rest and always think about how to improve and grow your company. If you believe in something, go for it. You might hit the walls hundreds of times, but never give up! Every time you pick yourself up from a fall, it will make your company that much stronger."

Myth:

Persons with disabilities lack the right skills for business.

Fact:

People with disabilities develop important critical thinking skills and other strengths, like perseverance, problem solving and determination, making them more valuable and marketable in the workplace.

Myth:

Providing access to accommodation is difficult and expensive.

Fact:

"Many employers believe that they'll have to make major changes to their offices, but statistics show that 15 per cent of accommodations are available at no cost," said Austin.

Myth:

Most disabilities are physical in nature.

Fact:

Less than 12 per cent of disabilities are mobility-related. Many people tend to associate a disability to one's physical mobility. However, the legal definition is much broader and also includes developmental disabilities.

Dispelling the Myths

How persons with disabilities can meet employer needs



According to Statistics Canada's 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, close to half of working-age adults with disabilities were either unemployed or not in the labour force at all. Programs like Business Takes Action (BTA) believe that taking advantage of this underused resource can help employers meet their current and future staffing needs.

BTA raises awareness of accessibility in the workforce, while promoting the benefits of hiring qualified persons with disabilities to meet skill shortages. The program also informs employers about the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005* and what businesses can do to provide a more inclusive work environment to employees and consumers. To achieve this, the Provincial Government is developing *Accessibility Standards*. Once passed, these standards will require organizations to

remove barriers in the following categories: customer service, transportation, information and communications, employment and built environment.

"We want to help businesses remove the physical and attitudinal barriers associated with hiring persons with disabilities," said Elaine Austin, Manager of Marketing and Communications at BTA. "Persons with disabilities bring higher productivity levels, lower absenteeism and fierce loyalty to an organization."

Whether you're an employer seeking talent, a person with a disability looking for accessible work or a support service provider looking to place a client, BTA's job portal allows companies to post and search for jobs and candidates. Companies can register online and there is no cost to join.

The bottom line is that there is a business case for hiring people with disabilities. When employers realize that this hiring practice translates into an effective retention strategy and adds value to their organization, more and more myths will be dispelled.

For more information, visit www.businesstakesaction.ca.

Richmond Hill SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE



To find out more about the Small Business Enterprise Centre and how it can assist you, please visit the small business section of the Office of Economic Development's Website at www.richmondhillonline.com.

Your Partner on the Road to Success

Did you know that approximately 85 per cent of Richmond Hill businesses employ less than 20 people? That's right! It's these small businesses form the backbone that drives Richmond Hill's economy. The Richmond Hill Small Business Enterprise Centre (RHSBEC) offers valuable assistance to help prospective entrepreneurs and small business owners on their road to success. The RHSBEC provides a one-stop source of services and programs for the Town's business community that includes:

- consultations with business consultants;
- free small business Start-up Kits;
- seminars, workshops and networking events;
- access to an extensive, centralized collection of current business-related resources;
- assistance with business plan preparation and market research;
- referrals to other business programs, services and associations; and
- programs for youth such as *Summer Company* and the *Business Plan Challenge*.

BizPaL officially launches in Richmond Hill

The Town of Richmond Hill recently launched *BizPaL*, a Canada-wide online permit and licence access system run by Industry Canada in partnership with Federal, Provincial, Regional and Municipal Governments.

BizPaL is an online service that allows the entrepreneur or business owner, a central place to find all the permit and licence information needed from all levels of government to start and/or grow a business.

BizPaL is simple to use. Entrepreneurs will be asked a series of questions about the type of business being started or expanded and the answers will then generate a personalized list of the permits and licences needed at the click of a mouse. To use the *BizPaL* program visit www.richmondhill.ca/bizpal.

Please provide us with your feedback.

Did you find this newsletter helpful and interesting? Is there anything you would like to see in the next issue of *Business Connections*? We want to know what you think. Please contact John Lyall, Researcher, at jllyall@richmondhill.ca or call (905) 747-6387 to share your opinions.

