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Cross-border business

Orleans County hot for Canadian manufacturers

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If Mississauga-based food processing company Pride Pak Canada Ltd. ends up acquiring the former BernzOmatic manufacturing facility and expanding operations to Medina, it would join a roster of Canadian businesses that have set up shop there.

It's all part of James Whipple's plan to make Orleans County a destination for Canadian manufacturers.

Whipple, CEO of the Orleans Economic Development Agency, said that for years he and Vice President [Gabrielle Barone](#) have worked with the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise and Greater Rochester Enterprise to attract businesses to the region.

And while some regions may try to draw companies or industries based on natural resources or existing infrastructure, he said they set their sights on Canadian companies long ago.

Barone said the Orleans agency prefers to look north for the next companies to fill the few vacant buildings in the county.

"We don't have a lot of building inventory, but if we were to go into neighboring counties we might have conflict there, as we could be perceived as poaching businesses," she said.

[Added Whipple](#), "We'd love to have multinational corporations here, but I think our real

niche is midsized companies that are privately owned. They're good to do business with, and when they come, they stay."

One of those that came and stayed is Hinspergers Poly Industries Ltd.

In 2002, the manufacturer of winter and solar pool covers opened its U.S. division in Medina.

General Manager [Greg Budde](#) said the company's 83,000-square-foot warehouse and manufacturing facility has been expanded twice since then. Also, he said, annual product sales are eight times what they were the year the company moved to the area. Today, the Medina operation employs 60.

Budde said Medina suits Hinspergers just fine.

"It's about two hours door to door from our head office and close enough for (owner) Peter Hinsperger or our vice president of finance to come down for a visit. Our Canadian and U.S. sales reps meet here, which is also close to our existing and growing customer base," he said.

When looking for a place to establish U.S. operations, Budde said many cities were considered.

"ut I would say that this region was settled on because of the proximity to our head office and customer base," he said.

Other Canadian companies with operations in Orleans County include Freeze-Dry Foods of Oakville, Ontario, and Niagara Falls, Ontario-based Brunner Inc.

Brunner is a 10-minute drive from the Hinspergers plant and makes drive axles, brake shoes and S-cams, which force brake shoes apart and against brake drums. The company recently completed a \$15 million expansion at its plant, which employs more than 400 and is in a former foundry built in 1951.

Vice President Bradley MacDonald said the community is strong and has resources such as low-cost hydropower to support the company's manufacturing initiatives and growth. He lauded Whipple and Barone as partners to help the company achieve its goals.

He said he's ready to pitch in if they ask Brunner Inc. to meet with Canadian companies looking to move to town.

"I've been asked and am prepared if the need arises," he said.

Pride Pak is a fruit and vegetable processing company that would spend more than \$9

million to acquire and develop the property, which includes more than 30 acres of land. Plans call for hiring 200 within the first five years.

Pride Pak exports about half of its products to the United States and anticipates new business with a large Northeastern U.S. grocery chain.

According to reports, Pride Pak is considering the former Bernzomatic hand torch manufacturing site, which is owned by Columbus, Ohio-based Worthington Cylinders and closed last year. Also, a site in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, that is near one of Pride Pak's customers.

David Bertola covers small business, energy and marketing