

THE TOWN OF MILTON

Canada's Fastest Growing Community

BY SCOTT LESLIE
The Business Link

Back in 1818, a man named Jasper Martin immigrated to Canada from Newcastle, England with his young family and decided to build a grist mill along Sixteen Mile Creek. It was an area known as "Mill Pond." By 1837, the district had developed into a small milling community of about 100 settlers and came to be known as "Mill Town" before eventually taking on its present day name of Milton.

Incorporated as a town in 1857, Milton may have started from very modest beginnings. But there's no denying the community has taken off in a big way. From 2001 to 2009 for instance, the Town of Milton has issued over 1,130 commercial, industrial and institutional building permits worth over \$800-million. Milton's population has also doubled over the past decade. (Their current population of 86,000 is expected to reach 238,000 by the year 2031.)

Why has Milton become the fastest growing community in Canada? The answer is simple. Milton has a wide range of attractive features for both residents and businesses. One of the four communities making up the Halton Region, Milton is just 40 kilometres west of Toronto and close to several major highways including the 401, 407, 403/QEW, 410, 427 and 400. The Town has access to water ports in Hamilton and Toronto that can ship cargo throughout the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Over the past several years, Milton has seen its residential population grow substantially due to the completion of the Big Pipe project, an initiative that allowed the community to receive water from Lake Ontario. As a result, several new subdivisions have been established including Hawthorne Village. Milton also has one of the lowest property tax rates in Southwestern Ontario and the Greater Toronto Area, making it exceptionally appealing to new investors.

The Town of Milton currently boasts several major employers in a wide variety of trades including Karmax Heavy Stamping (automotive), Sobey's Milton Retail Support Centre (food distributors), Transpro Freight Systems Limited (logistics), CBM Metal (metal fabrication) and Dare Foods Limited (food processing).

But several major industrial firms have also been expanding their operations in Milton of late. This February for instance, advanced plastics manufacturer ABM Canada Inc. began construction on a new 178,000 square foot warehouse and office facility. Scheduled to open later this year, this business will bring over 100 new jobs to the Milton community. This past year, Roxul Inc. also completed a new expansion to their Milton plant. Over time, the \$150-million expansion is expected to create 100 new jobs at Roxul and contribute over \$2.5-million annually to the local economy.

In order to make the community more attractive to industries, Milton has now added two substantial business parks. In late 2009, Milton began developing the second phase of the Derry Green Corporate Business Park. Situated south of Highway 401, this 2,000 acre industrial property will provide ample room for new development and complement the Town's 550 acre 401 Industrial/Business Park which is already 80% complete.

In 2010, Milton has put a high priority on updating and adding new infrastructure to the community. One of the town's biggest recent infrastructure construction projects is taking place at the Milton Sports Centre on 605 Santa Maria Boulevard. The \$20.24-million state-of-the-art expansion will include two ice pads, an elevated walking track and a double gymnasium. Milton also began construction on a new \$24.59-million Milton Arts & Entertainment Centre and Central Library on the corner of Main Street and Thompson Road.

The Town of Milton is also in the middle of a campaign to establish the Milton Education Village. This 450-acre community is located on the southwest side of Milton near the Niagara Escarpment, will house a research park, residential neighbourhoods and several retail stores. However, the focus of the development will be a new 150-acre campus of Wilfrid Laurier University. Originally initiated by Laurier and the Town of Milton in 2008, the project is currently in the design, planning and fundraising stages.

Milton has seen more than its share of success in recent years. But with their attractive business climate and their world-class amenities, Milton's status as one of North America's fastest growing communities is ensured. ■

THE SLIPPING POINT

Recognizing the power of innovation and then acting to create an Innovative discussion within your organization is the key to avoiding the slipping points.



Innovation is a dialogue and language that comes from being open to new ideas and from constantly searching for new information or ideas that might change the landscape of the business or market you play in.

BY TIM EMPRINGHAM

At some point in the evolution of even the most successful companies, an interesting thing happens—growth stalls. Even the brightest and most experienced Entrepreneurs and managers are perplexed as the things they did to create the initial growth in the company no longer drive new revenues. In fact if they stick with old methods and ideas things go from bad to worse as revenues and profits start to fall. I call this moment of change a 'slipping point', and no business is immune to them.

"Innovation isn't a project that you can implement once and forget; it is an iterative discussion that continually evolves with your business..."

The reason that slipping points happen is that as companies grow their needs and markets change, but due to the slow and incremental nature of these changes they are hard to recognize until things have stalled out.

The leadership skills that take a company from inception to \$5 million in revenue are different than the leadership skills that are required to take a company from \$5 million to \$15 million. The process of creating new products and services is more complicated as a company grows than it was when an Entrepreneur was dedicating all of their time to creating the first offering. Markets change and evolve as competitors redefine meanings, launch their own new products and services, and as customers needs evolve and grow. In short, things change and companies fail to adapt.

The solution to the problem is integrating Innovation into the dialogue of your organization. Innovation changes these stall points from slipping points to growth opportunities by providing both

incremental and disruptive evolution strategies which enable a company to avoid the pitfalls associated with failing to adapt to change.

By encouraging an ongoing discussion that challenges market assumptions and searches for new meanings and value propositions an organization keeps its eyes and ears open to new growth opportunities as they appear. Further, by seeking outside interpreters who can help to view your market in new ways, actively seeking to understand the needs of customers and non-customers, and constantly testing new ideas through

early prototyping an organization can maximize their capacity for growth and minimize the effect of these slipping points on their evolution.

Innovation is a dialogue and language that comes from being open to new ideas and from constantly searching for new information or ideas that might change the landscape of the business or market you play in.

Finally, Innovation isn't a project that you can implement once and forget; it is an iterative discussion that continually evolves with your business driving you forward toward the next slipping point. Recognizing the power of innovation and then acting to create an Innovative discussion within your organization is the key to avoiding the slipping points. ■

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