

Investing in Canadian Manufacturing

Creating a vibrant, local economy is not just the job of the government. Canadian business owners—particularly manufacturers—also have a significant responsibility. These roles are played out in the decisions made about staffing, facility locations and where materials and equipment are sourced.



By Mark Lichtblau

Building factories overseas and exporting labour may save Canadian manufacturers money today, but it won't help those businesses—or the economy in which they operate—tomorrow. If each manufacturing job supports almost three other jobs in that economy (Economic Policy Institute, 2003), it follows that the loss of each manufacturing job leads to the loss of three others.

MacNeil Automotive Founder and CEO David MacNeil said it best: "If my neighbour doesn't have a job, sooner or later I won't have a job either."

Businesses cannot disregard the bottom line in favour of altruistic endeavours. But if they perceive profits as the only measure of organizational success, they run the risk of missing what it means to run a sustainable company.

Sustainability—defined as 'the triple bottom line' made up of social,

environmental and economic factors—is a necessity in 21st century business. Not only does it create new market niches and attract new customers, it also ensures proper care for employees and the wider community. When success is re-imagined this way, investment in local manufacturing is not a sacrifice, but an asset.

Had Haremar remained a distributor, as when we started in 1966, we would have needed only 10 unskilled employees to move boxes, and 35,000 square feet of space in which to store them. The millions of dollars spent on Brampton Engineering's equipment—a business located 25 kilometres west of our facility—would never have been invested. Moving up the value chain, Haremar would not have used the services of Canadian National Railway to receive the polyethylene sourced from Canadian suppliers and refined from Canadian-drilled oil and gas.

By its nature, manufacturing has a multiplying effect that creates economies.

Because of that reality, Haremar proudly states that we employ 100 skilled, well-paid staff in a 139,000-square-foot facility. We can be sure that our employees work in a safe, healthy and professional environment—not a guarantee in other parts of the world. Finally, we can say that our business continues to contribute to Canadian industries, such as transportation, packaging, chemistry, engineering, and oil and gas.

The equation is simple. If Canadian businesses continue to invest in their own people and their own industries, they will not only help sustain their own companies, but they will also help keep Canada open for business.