

Coming soon: National headquarters for East Penn's battery distribution and warehouse facility

By Bev Caswell

While driving along the 401 west of Bowmanville have you noticed the huge new building making its presence known on land adjacent to the large incinerator at the Durham York Energy Centre? Mystery solved. This is the future home of East Penn Canada, a battery distribution centre.

According to Faye Langmaid, Acting Director of the Planning and Development Services Department, Municipality of Clarington, the site at 1840 Energy Drive, Courtice, will accommodate "a two-storey national head office, warehouse and a battery distribution and warehouse facility with a total gross floor area of 18,280 square metres (nearly 200,000 square feet)."

East Penn Canada (previously Power Battery Sales) holds the largest battery inventory in Canada and has been in existence since 1979. East Penn Canada President Mike Bouchard says, "We have the largest Canadian distribution network of fully stocked warehouses, as well as our own service and delivery fleets." The company also has a strong commitment to the environment with a robust battery recycling program and a practice of "giving back in the communities in which we work," adds Bouchard.

"We distribute both lead and lithium batteries for a multitude of applications, says Bouchard, "filling all types of battery power needs from passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, marine, mo-

torcycle, powersports, ATV, snowmobiles, lift trucks, data centres, back up power, solar power, and UPS systems. We are also the Master Distributor for Duracell Alkaline batteries in Canada."

The Clarington Board of Trade was instrumental in bringing this business to Clarington, says Langmaid.

Bonnie Wrightman, Manager of Business Development for the Clarington Board of Trade and Office of Economic Development says, "We learned about East Penn needing new space, because they were outgrowing their facilities in Ajax and Pickering and wanted to have all operations under one roof so they approached the Region of Durham for help in trying to stay local."

"At the same time," says Bouchard, "we wanted to find a community that would allow us to build space for our needs of today and the growth that we see in the future. We also wanted to be mindful of our team to ensure that we found a location that was easily accessible to as many as possible."

"We connect opportunities," says Sheila Hall, Executive Director and Economic Development Officer for the Clarington Board of Trade. So, when the company reached out to local municipalities to explore options, Hall and Wrightman responded immediately and within days they were visiting the decision-makers at the facility in Ajax.



Photo Courtesy of Clarington Board of Trade

Construction in full swing at 1840 Energy Drive, Courtice, the future home of East Penn Canada, which will accommodate the company's national headquarters, warehouse and a battery distribution and warehouse facility. Inset: Mike Bouchard, President of East Penn, Photo courtesy of Melanie Leutz Photography.

"We had an open conversation," says Wrightman, "to understand goals and we were able to offer them a really sweet piece of land," adding that "there isn't a lot of inventory in Clarington." The twenty-four-acre parcel, owned by Manheim (an auto auction location) had been unused for several years.

East Penn seized the moment and drew on the expertise of Hall and Wrightman who are skilled in helping businesses streamline the application process. As Wrightman points out, "There are always little bumps and wrinkles and we tend to be the iron to help get those wrinkles out.

We want to make it as smooth as possible for businesses, helping walk them through the process and make it easier for them," she says, they coordinate with the planning and engineering departments to ensure that shovels get in the ground.

According to Bouchard, "Clarington and the Energy Business Park was an ideal location with its intended

focus on great Energy companies and Prestige employment." He adds, "The Region of Durham, the Municipality of Clarington, and the Clarington Board of Trade have been very supportive of us joining the community, and we are excited about the future. The entire team in Clarington has been great to work with."

Wrightman points out that despite the pandemic, which caused an initial slowdown in the process, the new structure is going up at a desirably fast pace with a projected opening date of September 2021.

"They're going to be bringing their 200 employees to the new site," says Wrightman, pointing out that it is a win not only for Clarington but for Durham Region as well.

Bouchard says that the opportunity for future development to support their growth and the infrastructure of the surrounding area to support their employees was also a key decision point. "Many of our employees live in the region and surrounding area, and so this site was ideal based on our employee demographic. The support offered by the Clarington Board of Trade and Town Council was also a key criteria," he says.

As Hall points out, "Our connections in the community are far reaching. It's important for us to know who's creating the labour force. It's important for us to be connected to people who are innovative thinkers. It's important for us to be connected to people that are traditional business and education leaders. We do a lot of work with the high schools and with the university and college in Durham Region. So, it's a really broad brush that we paint with." Always alert to potential partnerships, Hall says, "Our job is to know what everybody's doing."

Hall and Wrightman both point to collaboration as a hallmark of their work. "Any good project, any successful project is a collaboration of people and a willingness to work together," says Hall. "Success never really happens without collaboration," adds Wrightman.

When asked if he is hopeful that electric cars will be the way of the future, Bouchard answers, "Electric Vehicles will be an increasingly important part of the future. We will continue to serve the battery power needs of vehicles and applications, wherever the road leads us."



Bonnie Wrightman, Manager of Business Development, Clarington Board of Trade & Office of Economic Development



Sheila Hall, Executive Director & Economic Development Officer at Clarington Board of Trade

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else." The time frame is from February 16 to March 31.

He adds that businesses have in the past gathered teams to participate in the bowling and hopefully they will this year. A big thanks to OPG, who is returning as the Title Sponsor this year. Pledge

sheets are available online he adds. We look forward to seeing and hearing about the creativity generated with this and want to hear and see your participation. Woo is watching the weather reports.

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