

ELLWOOD SHREVE

The Daily News

A spirit of co-operation has helped create a new company and save another area plant from being mothballed.

On Monday, local entrepreneur Mike Kilby announced the launch of his new company, Dajcor Aluminum Limited, which will begin operating by June in the former Daymond facility, which closed last November.

Kilby said the deal came together in about eight weeks after he became aware of the impending auction of the Daymond building and assets inside the facility.

The company and CAW Local 127, which represents 90 former Daymond employees, were able to hammer out a new collective agreement that has been ratified 100 per cent by the union membership.

The company is starting off with 20 hourly workers and 12 office staff and expects to employ 50 people by the end of the year and up to 100 in two years.

Kilby thanked the CAW for its hard work and diligence in working with the company to come up with a collective agreement "that is both flexible and competitive and will help position this company to be successful in the future."

Aaron Neaves, president of CAW 127, said, "this was only a pipe-dream six months ago."

He said the co-operation should dispel the myth that a union and private business can't work together.

"The easy part is negotiating a deal," he said. "The tough part was to try to find a local investor with local community roots who understands what it meant to be here."

Neaves said he has received calls from CAW national president Ken Lewenza and union locals across Ontario, noting, "this is a historical time . . . This is a benchmark of what we can do working together."

Dajcor will operate as an aluminum, extrusion, fabrication and anodizing company.

"We are a one-stop shop that can provide all those functions under one roof," Kilby said. "This is unique in the aluminum extrusion business."

He said the products manufactured at the plant will be used in everything from automobiles to solar panels.

Dajcor is working with former Daymond customers.

Kilby, who is known as a successful entrepreneur, believes there's a "certain confidence customers have that it's a brand new company, that it's well run, well capitalized. That will help lend them some comfort in bringing their business here."

Kilby also thanked Chatham-Kent's economic development services, along with Mayor Randy Hope and Chatham-Kent Essex MP Dave Van Kesteren, for their help in pulling this deal together.

Hope said Dajcor shows "we can achieve the ultimate goal of creating economies in our community that will thrive through the tough economic times.

"It takes teamwork, it takes leadership and it takes co-operation," he added.

Stuart McFadden, Chatham-Kent's manager of business development, said this kind of good news story is going attract other investments.

"We believe there are better days ahead in Chatham-Kent," he said, adding Dajcor Aluminum is "at the ground floor and part of that foundational piece."

Kilby said any positions that become available at Dajcor will be advertised online with the Canada Employment Job Bank at www.jobbank.ca and in local newspapers.

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