

# Kanata's SMART Technologies opens major assembly facility

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**Staff Writer**

The global market is on the doorstep of SMART Technologies' new assembly facility in Kanata.

The international company unveiled its purpose-built, 260,000 square-foot facility on Palladium Drive last Thursday morning. The building is now fully operational as the company's largest assembly and warehousing centre for global markets.

Several prominent federal, provincial and municipal politicians, suppliers and customers celebrated the unveiling in an interactive ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"Over the years, the team has grown here tremendously and we continue to support our business by building quality products to meet growing customer demand both here locally, as well as around the world," stated Dan Rodrigue, vice-president of operations for

SMART Technologies.

Attendees were treated to a tour of the production floor to view the state-of-the-art assembly operation.

SMART is best known for its flagship product, the SMART Board(TM), an interactive whiteboard which, since its introduction in 1991, has been installed in over 100 countries around the world.

Minister of Industry Jim Prentice, Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien, and Carleton-Mississippi Mills MPP Norm Sterling were in attendance.

City of Ottawa councillors for Kanata, ward 23 Kanata South councillor Peggy Feltmate and ward 4 Kanata North councillor Marianne Wilkinson, and ward 6 Stittsville-Kanata West councillor Shad Qadri, were also at the unveiling.

"My friends, we're living in a time when the engine of economic growth really is the human mind," said Prentice.

• See **SMART** pg. KA9



# SMART

## • From front page

"We build products, we offer services, we create entire industries on the strength of an idea. And we're living in a world where applying ingenuity is bringing new products and services to market are now the very definition of the requirements of success."

The questions today, said the minister, are what is successful in the future and how one goes about creating it.

Canadian businesses, he added, are coming up with the right answers to that question.

"We know that prosperity is not created by governments," Prentice said.

"We know that prosperity is created by Canadians like David Martin and Nancy Knowlton, the co-founders of SMART Technology, who brought their ideas to the market place and changed the face of business. And I am here to salute them and to salute what they have achieved in this remarkable company."

**SMART TECH** is a homegrown Canadian company that is showing that it has what it takes on the international stage, he said.

SMART's success didn't

pass Martin and Knowlton by chance, added Prentice, and it did not happen overnight.

"It is in the forefront of scientific development and technological achievement," said the Minister.

"We need more companies like this in Canada."

"We can all witness here today the enormous potential that is possible in Canadian product and innovation."

Prentice pledged to ensure the federal government gets the conditions

right so more and more Canadian businesses can experience and achieve the same level of success as SMART is having.

"I know that as Canadians on a level playing field with access to the market, we are determined, we are resilient, we can compete with anyone, we can take on the world and win in any place," he concluded.

MPP Norm Sterling, who is back for his ninth term following the provincial election on Oct. 10, says for the past 30 years, he has watched the expansion, the innovation, and the entrepreneurship this area has experienced over

that period of time.

"As Jim (Prentice) had mentioned, our growth and wealth of this country and this province depend upon innovation," Sterling remarked.

"And innovation is what this company is all about. I was talking to David (Martin) earlier today and he indicated to me that 90 per cent of their product is exported to other countries."

That brings real wealth back to Canada and the province of Ontario, so that government can provide the necessary social services, the education, the health care needed for our population.

"As one of the few engineers that has ventured into politics, I do understand some of the skills necessary for this area."

Mayor O'Brien said SMART has followed a fine tradition in the City of Ottawa and Kanata by coming into the area.

"It's absolutely mind-boggling when you look at it from the perspective of where we started in 1971," he said.

"I went into the technology sector in 1971 and there were 1,500 people



## Kanata EMC (Kanata, ON)

Order/Commande

121201

Date **02.11.2007**

Circ.

**23418**

Page

**1**

**3 / 4**

working the sector. There were ten companies, and we've watched that grow. According to numerous events I've attended, we're now up to 68,000 people working in the technology sector, and that is primarily in the area of Kanata."

He asked those in attendance if they thought they lived in the best city in the world. A rousing reply from the audience came in the form of "Oh yeah!"

That demonstrated a significant level of compassion, energy and innovation each and every person has shown, said O'Brien, as they have developed from the ground up to a company which has become a major part of the infrastructure in Ottawa.

David Martin, inventor of the SMART board and executive director of SMART Technologies, said he was approached by several members of the press before the event talking about why the company is doing things differently.

"In some ways, I guess we are but we are just continuing to do the right thing, and continuing to manufacture here in Canada makes a lot of sense and takes a lot of hard work, but I think a lot of the success comes from the community," said Martin.

"Our company is just over 20 years old; we introduced our first product in 1991," he added.

He explained the evolution of the SMART board, which was first brought out in 1986.

"It took a while for the idea of a SMART board - an interactive whiteboard - to become possible...It took a lot of persistence to get it up," said Martin.

SMART's product range now includes interactive whiteboards, interactive



<b>Kanata EMC (Kanata, ON)</b>				Order/Commande
				<b>121201</b>
Date <b>02.11.2007</b>	Circ. <b>23418</b>	Page <b>1</b>	<b>4 / 4</b>	

pen displays, interactive overlays, wireless slates, software applications, and a wide range of content resources.

During its 21-year history, SMART has been steadily expanding its Kanata-area operations to meet increasing global demand for its wide range of popular education, training and collaboration products.

The Kanata area has been consistently known as

the largest assembly and distribution location for SMART. The Kanata facility collaborates current operations which have been previously spread across three locations, and adds considerable space and capacity to handle future growth.

The building includes space for assembly, warehousing, research and development and administration, along with staff amenity space. SMART is also expanding its world

headquarters in Calgary, Alberta, with construction of a new 200,000 square-foot building, which began in September.

“As global demand for SMART products continues to grow, we recognize the need for a much larger and purpose-built facility in Kanata,” said Nancy Knowlton, SMART’s CEO and co-founder in a press release.

“We are committed to bringing the best technolo-

gy and innovation to the world and this building allows us to enhance our Kanata operations for the benefit of our staff and our customers.”

SMART is a private company founded in 1987 and currently employs more than 1,000 people.

It is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, with assembly facilities in Kanata and offices in Bonn, Tokyo, Shanghai, New York City, Chicago, and Washington, DC.