

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 2018

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Kingston (CN)

Johnstown

The hammer came down on a local business Friday afternoon - in a good way.

Canadian Rail Equipment Works and Services (CREWS) completed the first phase of its rail trans-loading facility adjacent to Johnstown's industrial park on Friday, with local dignitaries helping hammer in the last spike.

CREWS president and chief executive officer Clayton Jones joined Edwardsburgh/Cardinal Mayor Pat Sayeau, Leeds-Grenville MPP Steve Clark, MP Gord Brown and Canadian National (CN) sales and marketing official Daniel Lajoie for the ceremonial driving of the last spike on a cold afternoon at the railyard off County Road 2.

Jones said the firm plans to hire six people, then another 10 after it begins its second phase this spring.

"Four people are already hired," said Jones.

Jones, a Canadian Pacific diesel mechanic who left in 2004 and took his rail expertise to the private sector, is transferring CREWS to the 96-acre site west of the Giant Tiger distribution centre.

He said the location has all the right elements: Proximity to the Highway 401-416 interchange, the Port of Johnstown and the nearby international bridge.

The site also has access to CN's main line through a spur at Johnstown.

The first phase, which opened Jan. 22, can accommodate 200 rail cars.

The second phase will allow for 350 more cars.

CREWS's main business is providing trans-loading from rail cars to trucks, or vice-versa.

The company also allows rail car storage, in-plant switching for large industry and provides certified operating crews for locomotives and track mobiles.

CREWS, which is headquartered in Kemptville, has locations in Maitland and Hamilton and is in the process of moving its main office to the Johnstown site.

The interest has been building since the site opened, said Jones.

"Right now, I think we're getting two to three calls or emails a week," he said.

The total investment for the first phase will amount to \$2 million, said Jones, while the second phase will represent another \$4.5 million.

That will be followed by a third and fourth phase, at the end of which the company will have created 50 jobs, said Jones.

Sayeau is excited at this investment into a growing part of the township, adding he has been touting the virtues of that area for some time.

"The whole area at the Port of Johnstown: Location, location, location is everything," said Sayeau.

But in fact, there is more to CREWS's success, added the mayor.

"It's also a question of the right timing and the right economic environment," said Sayeau.

CN's business model is changing, to the point where the large firm wants to concentrate on its core business rather than trans-loading and storage, so companies like CREWS are able to seize the opportunity, he said.

"I'm really excited about what's going to happen in Phase Two," added Sayeau, leaving the specifics to CREWS to announce later.