

Michael Knell's

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SUMMER 2022

Volume 11, Issue 2



*Corey
McMullan:*
TIKTOK STAR

MATTRESS MATTRESS:
SECRETS TO SUCCESS

LAS VEGAS
MARKET PREVIEW

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When thinking about social media influencers, everyday independent furniture, mattress and appliance retailers don't usually spring immediately to mind. But an Ottawa-area family business owner is proving all it takes is a little humour and a lot of authenticity to generate a lot of likes and follows, drive store traffic and ring-up more than the odd sale. Ashley Newport profiles Corey McMullan, owner of McMullan's Appliance & Mattress.



ON OUR COVER: Corey McMullan is seen here in his Smith Falls, Ontario appliance and mattress store. The former buying group executive and owner of McMullan Appliance & Mattress has become something of a celebrity on TikTok, the social media platform that features short videos. Using humour, solid product knowledge and a lot of authenticity, his channel has earned literally millions of likes and thousands of followers to drive store traffic and ring-up more than the odd sale.



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Western Canada's largest independent mattress chain is looking to expand after experiencing a pandemic boom. Founder and majority shareholder Eric Buchfink told HGO's Michael Knell he plans to do this by infusing the lessons learned during the tragedy with the disciplined approach it has taken to operating the business and interacting with the customer.

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Tepperman's has installed a solar panel on the roof of its 70,000 square foot store in this south-western Ontario city – it's first ever. The \$500,000 investment, combined with instore conversation efforts, it may well ween the store off the grid for good. Michael J. Knell reports.

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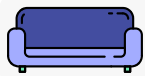
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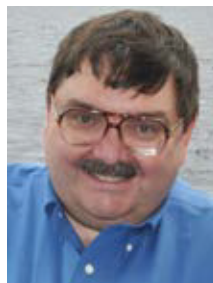


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MICHAEL J. KNELL

WE NEED A SHOW

The excellence displayed by the organizers of the Las Vegas Market has left me more convinced than ever the Canadian furniture and mattress industry needs to create its own national trade event. The hard part will be making it happen.

IT HAS BEEN THREE YEARS SINCE THE CANADIAN FURNITURE AND mattress industry gathered in one place. I'm sorry to say I wasn't there. Instead, I was confined to a hospital room after being diagnosed with a silent heart attack. That was 2019 and the last Toronto Furniture Show.

When it closed for the last time, people had been whining about the Canada's only national furniture and mattress trade event for years. Exhibitors complained not enough retailers attended, and those that did didn't buy enough to justify the expense. Meanwhile retailers complained about depth and quality of the product on display and bemoaned the fact that the big guns weren't to be found on the floor. Both sides also recognized both the role of these events and the procurement of product had changed radically in recent years.

After three years without a national event on neutral ground, I've come to the realization the industry really needs one. We need a place to come together to build relationships, explore new ideas and celebrate excellence. I'm loath to admit I don't have a clue about how we're going to do that.

Elsewhere in this issue of the *Merchandiser*, we look at Canada's participation in the Las Vegas Market. First off, this publication is grateful to its organizers for its ongoing support.

Just under 40 Canadian furniture, home décor and giftware resources will show in the Summer 2022 edition of the event. This is a well-run event. I walked the halls of the World Market Center. It is almost an ideal campus for hosting such as event – it's easy to navigate and the support services for attending retail buyers and other industry professionals are excellent.

The organizers want Canadians to attend and those who do are warmly welcomed. While they don't publish a list of those who do, I've been told off the record it's fairly substantial.

Their excellence has convinced me this industry needs its own event. The challenge is making it happen. Therein lies the rub.

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AFFILIATE MEMBER





I LOVE LAS VEGAS MARKET

"I've been coming here since day one when it opened. Las Vegas Market is important because it is a selection of product from all over the world. We source everything from solid wood upholstery, of course leather motion accessories, rugs you name it. If it's here, we're interested in it."

– **Mike Norris, Sourcing/Buyer,**
Gallery Furniture, Houston, Texas
Furniture, Décor, Upholstry, Leather,
Motion and Rugs Buyer

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THE HEAT IS ON: CANADIANS GEAR UP FOR SUMMER IN LAS VEGAS

Now that almost all COVID restrictions have been lifted, Canadian exhibitors are set to open their showrooms for the upcoming Las Vegas Market. Most anticipate a market similar to others held at this time of year: one smaller than its winter counterpart, but still worth the trip to Sin City. **BY ASHLEY NEWPORT**

ALTHOUGH THE COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage on around the world, effective vaccines and antivirals have allowed most countries to return to some semblance of normalcy. This has prompted many big-ticket home goods retailers, manufacturers and distributors to get back into the swing of things by attending trade events both in and outside of Canada.

And now, with the Summer 2022 edition of the Las Vegas Market (LVM) fast approaching, many are preparing for a few days of networking, selling and reconnecting with old and new customers.

"We have a lot more staff attending this year," Jade Merriman, vice-president of LH Imports, recently told *Home Goods Online*. The Burnaby, British Columbia-based furniture and home décor importer/distributor is sending roughly 20 sales representatives as well as a number of in-house staff members to man its showroom (C485) in the World Market Center, whose campus has housed the event for some 15 years now.

"We expect [the market] to be busier. During the pandemic, there were times we didn't send staff because of safety measures, but we also didn't know how busy the shows would be, so it didn't make sense to send everyone. Lucky for us, the shows were stronger than our expectations," she added.

According to International Market Centers (IMC), which owns and operates both LVM and the World Market Center, the summer trade event is expected to showcase more than 4,000 product lines and over one million actual products over its five-day run, which begins on July 24.

That said, Merriman acknowledges LVM's summer edition is generally less busy than winter version, which is traditionally held ▶

at the end of January each year. (The Winter 2023 edition begins on January 29, 2023.)

"We do think it'll be pre-pandemic levels but summer shows are generally not as busy as winter shows, but we're hearing from our Canadian customers, mostly from western and mid-Canada, that they're raring to go to market. Many of our customers wanted to go to the last one but there was a COVID wave," Merri-man said.

"The January show was very good for us on the American side. We know we could be impacted by people who have not updated their passports or by people who will still need to quarantine if they're not fully vaccinated, but overall, we're hearing decent enthusiasm," she continued, adding, "I think we're going to be close to 100 per cent pre-pandemic attendance because more people are wanting to go out and travel and they haven't been to a show in a while."

Others agree the event will boast a number of Canadian attendees – particularly from the western provinces and B.C.

"We've been talking to a lot of customers in western Canada and we've seen more interest in B.C. and Alberta and some from the prairies, but not from Ontario and Quebec," observed Carl Lovett, vice-president of sales for Sunpan, the Toronto-headquartered designer, manufacturer and wholesaler of contemporary furnishings for both commercial and residential use.

Much like Merriman, Lovett believes the summer market is generally less well-attended than its winter counterpart, mainly because of its timing and the weather (it's very hot in Nevada at that time of year).

"The summer show is never as well-attended as the January show. People have their own summer plans, so a lot of people skip that show but we see customers from the southwestern U.S. and western Canada," he says, adding Sunpan (B700) typically begins reaching out to Canadian customers to gauge their interest about a month before the event. "American customers will decide a week or two before [if they're going to attend]."

Others say even though they don't expect to see as many Canadian customers, they're still seeing quite a bit of interest.

"I'm not sure how many Canadians will be travelling to summer market, as it is traditionally the slower of the two markets," says Gary Christianson, sales and marketing director for modern furniture designer ▶



The W dining table from Mobital has two manual, self-storing extending leaves under the table. It features a black powder-coated steel base with a top made from ceramic and glass that is laminated together. The ceramic has a matte leathered textured finish and is scratch and stain resistant. Paired here with Puccini chairs which have a seamless return swivel mechanism and offered in two luxurious fabric options of rhino ultra-suede and evergreen tweed.

The Craftsman chair from Mobital is has a solid Ashwood frame and upholstered in top grain leathers. It features a unique back cushion support made from leather straps and bronzed buckles. Offered in a black stained ash frame with black leather or a light walnut-stained ash from with either black or tan leather.



The Albi armchair from PinkCity is seen here in a linen look polyester fabric called Milano on a wood frame in a cognac finish. Also offered in black leather.



PinkCity will introduce the Accord group of occasional tables at the summer market, constructed in mango wood with a cognac finish. The coffee table is seen here.



Above: The home office remains an important category for most furniture retailers. Nicer Furniture, an importer based in Toronto, is showing this leather high back executive chair – seen here in chocolate brown – during the Las Vegas Market.

Right: In addition to furniture, Las Vegas Market focuses on other home décor and giftware categories. Seen here is an example of the Acacia teardrop boards sold by Lynn & Liana Designs of Steinbach, Manitoba. This is a selection from their Teardrop Caribbean collection.

Inset: The oblong cabinet pulls that stretch across the cabinet fronts is a key design element of the Astrid collection from Mercana. Beautifully crafted from solid mango wood and finished to show of the natural grain, it elevates storage solutions for a bedroom, living room or office. The Astrid armoire includes both built-in and two removable shelves. Also offered as a sideboard/dresser or accent cabinet/nightstand



and manufacturer Mobital of Laval, Quebec.

“There is generally a good showing of designers in the U.S.A. and California market and we do expect to be busy regardless of the quantity of Canadians coming down,” he says, adding Mobital (B775) has also been able to connect with customers at several local events it hosted itself on the west coast between the Las Vegas and High Point markets. “Having said that, I am already filling up my calendar with appointments.”

Sara Samieian, co-chief executive officer and co-owner of the Vancouver-based distributor Moe’s Home Collection (C474), expects fairly robust attendance from Canadian buyers who are in the mood to see and touch merchandise in person.

“All of the COVID restrictions have now lifted, the world has opened up once again and many people have not been to a market in a couple of years. We are such a tactile industry; people want to touch and experience everything that’s new and exciting,” she says.

LH Import’s Merriman says another factor that could drive strong attendance is the slight cooldown in demand from that seen at the worst of the pandemic which ensured many retailers were simply too busy taking and fulfilling orders to travel.

“In the past few years, things have been so busy that people could not leave their stores. This is the first opportunity that they’ll have to get away. The frenzy wasn’t just about the volume of sales but how to deal with it all, like

how to get products, get through the new tariffs on leather and motion furniture, etc. Our volume is still there but what has calmed is the ability to understand what’s going on,” Merriman observed.

She noted most retailers – as well as their vendors – often needed all hands on deck at the time to deal not only with significantly increased demand, but increased production costs, supply chain issues, unpredictable weather disasters and COVID-related shut-downs in countries such as China and Vietnam.

“There was a 300 per cent tariff on leather from China and Vietnam, which has come down. Some people had to reroute their products [because of financial pressures]. There were also forest fires, floods and restrictions and increased volume and everyone wanting furniture,” she pointed out.

What exhibitors have planned

Although some exhibitors expect a quieter show – especially in terms of east coast attendance (both Canada and the U.S.) – others are planning to offer retail buyers a little something extra to get them into the showroom.

“We have lunch for our customers like many wholesalers do,” says Merriman, adding since the buying frenzy that accompanied pandemic lockdowns appears to be cooling, LH plans to emphasize its best-selling products to entice buyers who might have, until recently, been willing to put anything they could get on their floors.

“We got a new, additional space to show off ▶

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Above: The elegant Coco wall mirror from LH Imports is a classical piece that doesn't easily go out of style. The oval top shaped mirror frame is made of reclaimed teak, shaped and curved by hand around the actual mirror. With its timeless, minimalistic design, the full-sized mirror is easy to mix into many interior design styles.



Inset: Canabed will show its line of hemp mattresses such as the model seen here. The company says hemp naturally regulates temperature, it's up to three times stronger and softer than cotton. It is also resistant to dust mites, bed bugs, humidity and mould while providing the ultimate in comfort

our top sellers, which will allow our customers to know what's tried and true and that will become very important in the near future. Now we need to go back to the old process of, 'I want the best seller on my floor, I want something that will turn over.' People will go back to what they want rather than just what they're able to get," she believes.

Samieian says while Moe's Home Collection always encourages its customers to travel to the market, it's also making its best products more visible to customers at home.

"We always encourage our Canadian customers to make it down to Las Vegas Market if they can. Additionally, we pivoted in May

and renovated the second floor of our headquarters in British Columbia [to offer] our own tradeshow experience bi-annually. This new showroom houses all of the new introductions before they even hit the Las Vegas and High Point markets," she noted.

What will be on display?

While most exhibitors are showcasing their best sellers, visiting retail buyers can also expect to see a number of new items as well.

Moe's Home Collection will introduce what the company describes as on-trend sectionals, including the *Romy* modular sectional, a modern sofa available in a variety of colours and sizes as well as its more 1970s-inspired cousin, the *Zeppelin* modular sectional, which boasts a distinct, "legless" aesthetic.

Meanwhile, Merriman says LH Imports will display over 100 new products.

"We have so much new stuff because it took a while to arrive, so we have at least 100 brand new items for Vegas," she says, adding, "We've got a ton of new upholstery, a lot of club chairs and accent chairs because it's easy for people to add a piece rather than change a whole room. We have new outdoor pots, planters and hanging planters. We are showing bathroom vanities for the first time at this market and they're rustic, solid wood with marble. We've got some new collections and some leather upholstery, which is not easy to get in Canada right now."

Is the market changing?

Over the last two years, homebound Canadians have funnelled money typically earmarked for travel and entertainment into home renovations, leaving retailers and manufacturers scrambling to fulfill orders.

Now, with most restrictions lifted and Canadians raring to spend on restaurants, concert tickets and hotels, demand is cooling although most exhibitors say they're still as busy as ever.

"Our business is very strong and we're still seeing record months and we have quite a big backlog to fill," says Sunpan's Lovett. "The demand seems quite strong for this quarter and our next two quarters look strong. We do hear from larger retailers that things have slowed down and are coming back to pre-COVID levels but mid to high-end business and the hospitality business has really picked up."

Lovett also remarked Sunpan is seeing a shift rather than a slowdown, adding non-residential businesses are currently revamping their spaces and purchasing furniture and other décor. ►

"We're seeing a lot of furniture going into the contract hospitality world. A lot of people are vacationing here in North America, so hotels and restaurants are renovating and needing new furniture," he said.

Other exhibitors say while there has been some relief in supply chain challenges that saw goods held up overseas due to a lack of shipping containers or COVID-related factory shutdowns, many are now dealing with the logistical challenge of having too much backordered product arrive at once.

"Sales have been robust to this point especially with containers and backorders finally shipping on time and at acceptable freight/shipping rates," says Mobital's Christianson. "Everything has seemed to be shipped out and arriving all at once, however, which creates a problem for warehousing and space for such volume in production."

Merriman says LH Imports has been grappling with the same challenge. "We're still very busy because we're fulfilling orders but [now] everything is either coming in at once or being put on hold again if a port has congestion, so we're doing our best to get orders to customers," she says, adding it has sometimes been difficult to find warehouse space.

"We're still seeing high intakes of orders but we're hearing through different sources that there's a bit less traffic in stores but we haven't felt it yet in regards to new orders or shipments. That's something for us to be aware of and it would not surprise us if there's a slight shift or change based on what's happening in our economy," she adds.

What to expect in 2023?

While sales have been nothing short of phenomenal over the past two years, the ongoing pandemic, rising inflation, increased fuel, freight and material prices and a frightening war in Eastern Europe have left many company executives unsure of what to expect once all the back orders get filled.

"The uncertainty of the future is what people are going to base their decisions on," says

The Albi armchair from PinkCity is seen here in a linen look polyester fabric called Milano on a wood frame in a cognac finish. Also offered in black leather.



Lovett. "If you listen to all the economists about the financial outlook, there's uncertainty...and uncertainty will make someone think twice about making a substantial purchase. The [American and Canadian governments] need to show they've got things under control and that inflation is going to cool down. People will sit on the side lines. We see that in retail."

Christianson thinks people in the industry seem to be anticipating a slowdown. "I hate to propose self-fulfilling prophecies about the economy as sometimes we create our own hype and recessions, but I think we are all expecting some sort of slowdown in the second half of the year with less disposable income, higher interest rates for mortgages and increases in gas to get around," he says.

"Our forecast and goal is to exceed 2021 ▶

Sleek and handsome, the Briar sideboard from Sunpan fuses the best of mid-century and modern design. Made with a weathered solid oak wood frame, it features a beautiful white marble top and is completed with an iron base and hardware in an antique brass finish. Also available in a dark brown oak finish. As marble is a natural material, unique veining, pitting, fissures, micro-cracks and colour variations are all characteristics that add to the uniqueness and beauty of each piece.



The Blakely from Sunpan is a boldly designed contemporary, rectangular end table crafted with an antique brass steel top and a matte black powder coated steel base. Coordinating occasional tables are available and is also offered in a gunmetal finish.

sales numbers with the new partnerships we have made over the last two years,” he added.

Samieian notes while demand remains strong, inflation is something that everyone is keeping their eye on. “A combination of higher interest rates and inflation are lessening the demand a little bit. However, to date, demand has still been strong,” she says, adding, “We do not currently foresee any price changes over the next few months.”

While she’s optimistic overall, Merriman says there are “a lot of challenges to get through.”

“The continuation of tariffs – those are cause for higher costs for products and a lot of Canadian wholesalers and retailers were affected by those. Inflation and, the fear of inflation on its own will have a huge impact on people’s spending. Not only does inflation affect everything, it’s also on top of increased prices caused by overseas freight costs. The cost of getting something into Canada is now four times the price,” she says. “We have gas prices also increasing the cost of freight so at what point does the consumer say, ‘it’s too much?’”

That said, Merriman hopes that fear of the unknown doesn’t have a detrimental effect on the industry and overall economy. “In regard to 2022, for us, the indicators are that it will continue to be a strong year but 2023 is more of an unknown. Hopefully, we’re dealing more with fear than a real storm.” **HGO**

A contributing editor to HGO Merchandiser, ASHLEY NEWPORT is a Toronto-based freelance journalist who writes primarily for trade and business publications. Her specialties include food, hospitality and emerging social/business trends.

38 Canadian companies to show at Summer Market

Roughly 38 Canadian furniture, home furnishings and giftware resources are expected to open their doors at the World Market Center in Las Vegas for the Summer 2022 edition of the Las Vegas Market (LVM) which will begin its usual five-day run this coming Sunday, July 24.

Held twice each year in January and July, the **Las Vegas Market** is owned and operated by International Market Centers (IMC), which also operates many of the showroom buildings making up the High Point Market.

It should be noted the Government of Canada continues to advise against what it calls ‘non-essential’ travel outside of the country. Canadian industry professionals wishing to attend the market are advised to contact Global Affairs Canada and their local health authorities before making travel arrangements.

Click here to review the current federal government guidelines concerning international travel.

The last pre-pandemic edition of the Las Vegas Market was held in January 2020 event saw some 50 Canadian companies exhibit.

The market is divided into three broad categories: furniture (including upholstery, case goods, mattresses and related products and services sold both by and to furniture retailers); home décor (mainly accessories such as mirrors, lamps, area rugs); and giftware (which ranges from artwork and frames to candles and handbags). The event attracts retailers in all three categories as well as interior designers.

According to the organizers, the following furniture resources have permanent showrooms in the World Market Centre and are expected to show at the Summer 2022 edition of the Las Vegas Market (their showrooms are identified where known):

Bellini Modern Living – B670
CabinetBed – B220-12
Cannabeds – C1565
CorLiving Distribution – A547
Decor-Rest Furniture – A554
Magnussen Home – A730
Minhas Furniture House/
Flair Enterprises – A1000
Mobital – B775
Mountain House Furniture – B250-05
Nicer Interiors – B201-36
Pinkcity Imports – B226
Primo International – C1412
Sealy Sofa Convertibles – B1028
Sunpan Modern Home – B700
Tailbase – B1050
XSENSOR Technology – C1579

The following are listed as home décor exhibitors:

Chive Inc. – C1001
Elite Home Theater Seating – A238
Giftcraft – C639, C644
LH Imports – C485
Mercana Furniture & Décor
– B306, B316
Northwood Collection – A430
Picture Deport – B349
Mood Dekor – B333
RENEWIL – A425
Streamline Art – B346

These companies are listed as giftware resources:

Canpol – C159
Danica – E716
Good Luck Sock – E551
Hape – C1097
Pixie Mood – E209
Torre & Tagus – C156
Vintage Décor – E566
Celadon Art – B349

The showrooms will be open Sunday to Wednesday from 8am until 6pm and will close at 4pm on the last day of market. The Winter 2023 edition of the Las Vegas Market will run from January 29 to February 2.

INDUSTRY CALENDAR



The Toronto Congress Centre will play host to both the Gift + Home Show, operated by the Canadian Giftware Association in August and the Kitchen & Bath Canada conference and exposition that's slated to be held in October.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a list of published dates for trade events of interest to Canadian furniture, mattress and major appliance retailers. Because of volatility surrounding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, those interested in attending are strongly urged to visit the organiser's web site before making any travel arrangements. The dates are subject to change and were accurate when this issue of the Merchandiser went to press.

July 24 to 28, 2022
LAS VEGAS MARKET
 World Market Center
 Las Vegas, NV
lasvegasmarket.com

August 7 to 10, 2022
TORONTO GIFT & HOME FAIR
 Canadian Gift Assn.
 Toronto Congress Centre
 Mississauga, ON
cangift.org

August 13 to 18, 2022
NATIONWIDE PRIMETIME
 Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center
 Orlando, FL
nationwideprimetime.com

August 28 to 30, 2022
CANTREX PRIMETIME
 Cantrex PrimeTime
 Palais des Congrès
 Montréal, QC
cantrexprimetime.ca

September 22 to 25, 2022
INTERIOR DESIGN SHOW VANCOUVER
 Vancouver Convention Center
 Vancouver, BC
interiordesignshow.com

October 22 to 26, 2022
HIGH POINT MARKET
 High Point, NC
highpointmarket.org

October 26 to 28, 2022
KITCHEN & BATH CANADA
 Toronto Congress Centre
 Mississauga, ON
kbcexpo.com

November 13 to 16, 2022
INTERWOVEN
 (Formerly Showtime)
 International Textile Marketing Assn.
 Market Square
 High Point, NC
internationaltextilealliance.org

January 16 to 21, 2023
IMM COLOGNE
 Koelnmesse
 Cologne, Germany
imm-cologne.com

January 29 to February 23, 2023
LAS VEGAS MARKET
 World Market Center
 Las Vegas, NV
lasvegasmarket.com



Corey McMullan (left) and brother Kyle are seen here outside their family's store – McMullan Appliance & Mattress – located in Smith Falls, Ontario, about half-way between Ottawa and Kingston

GOING VIRAL

Ottawa appliance retailer makes it big on TikTok

When thinking about social media influencers, everyday independent furniture, mattress and appliance retailers don't usually spring immediately to mind. But an Ottawa-area family business owner is proving all it takes is a little humour and a lot of authenticity to generate a lot of likes and follows, drive store traffic and ring-up more than the odd sale.

BY ASHLEY NEWPORT

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DECADES, almost every furniture, mattress and appliance retailer has used a variety of traditional and modern media – flyers, television, radio, newspaper, online – to promote their store brand, products and services to consumers. With the explosion of platforms such as Facebook, Google and YouTube many have added social media in their arsenal. But few in this industry have utilized TikTok – a social media site based in the People's Republic of China with over a billion active users from practically everywhere across the globe that allows them to upload short-form mobile videos – as deftly and expertly as Corey McMullan, co-owner McMullan Appliance & Mattress in Smiths Falls, Ontario.

McMullan, who launched the store's now verified (or 'blue check marked') TikTok account (@mcmullanappliance) in March 2020, has watched his follower count grow from just a few thousand viewers to over 370,000 in just over two years (the platform has only been in existence for about six years) – not bad for a ▶

single-unit family owned-and-operated merchant in a picturesque town of a little under 10,000 people roughly half-way between Ottawa and Kingston.

"I downloaded TikTok back in March of 2020 and saw that there were funny videos. I started filming one for my personal channel, and I thought, 'I can make a super-fast video and put text on it and a music background and have a nice, high-quality video.' I would then put it on [McMullan's] Facebook page or YouTube channel but then I started a McMullan channel on TikTok and then the followers started," McMullan told *Home Goods Online* in a recent interview.

Once the store's channel – which currently has some 4.5 million likes, 382,000 followers and a library of more than 200 videos (as this issue of the *Merchandise* went to press) – hit 44,000 followers, people started paying attention.

HOW IT STARTED

While McMullan currently operates **McMullan Appliance and Mattress** in collaboration with his father, Brian and brother Kyle, he has actually worked for a number of other retailers and spent the bulk of his career in the industry as the director of appliances for Cantrex Nationwide, this country's oldest national buying group.

"I was one of those kids that just loved to go to work with my dad on Saturdays or when I wasn't in school," he says. "I was always interested in what my dad was doing. When he started paying me, I was 14. My first job was technically cleaning ashtrays on the washers."

The McMullan brand was born when Corey's uncle opened the first McMullan Appliance store in the 1970s. Then in 1990, Brian McMullan opened what was then called simply McMullan Appliance, although in addition to white goods, they also sold furniture and mattresses. "McMullan's have sold appliances in this town for 50 years," he says.

After moving away from home in 1997, McMullan began working at Atlas Appliances in Calgary, before moving back to Ontario selling appliances, grills and fireplaces for Enbridge Home Services in Hamilton.

In January 2000, he was recruited by Cantrex Nationwide (then a stand-alone organization called Cantrex Group, which was subsequently purchased by Nationwide Marketing Group in March 2012). While at Cantrex, McMullan developed an appliance program called Appliance Expert as well as a bedding program called Mattress World – which had both in-store galleries and stand-alone store fronts.

"I was in charge of digital marketing and



Brian McMullan, father of TikTok star Corey, who re-opened McMullan Appliance & Mattress as known today, is seen here sometime in the early 1990s with Jesse White, the late American actor who gained fame as 'Old Lonely' the original Maytag repairman.



Corey McMullan as seen on TikTok, the social media platform on which he has posted more than 160 short, usually humorous, videos that are not only entertaining, but strive to give the consumer important information about his store's product assortment.

successfully created a program that enabled short-term digital events to be automatically implemented across different independent retailers and websites," he recalls.

While McMullan focused on helping Cantrex members leverage the plethora of marketing options available to them, he was still beholden to more traditional methods and the monotony of same-same flyers and cookie-cutter promotions prompted him to try less orthodox methods to grow the family brand.

McMullan decided to leave Cantrex in 2017 and join his father and brother in the family business the following year. It should be noted McMullan Appliance & Mattress remains a Cantrex member.

"What was the inspiration [for using TikTok]? Being forced to do advertising traditionally for 17 years. For 15 years, I printed flyer after flyer ten times a year and it got so boring. You do a January price freeze or Boxing Week or Black Friday deals, but you're singing the same message as your competitor. You need to personify your business and have a personality. You've got to stand out from the crowd," he enthuses, noting once he re-joined the family business, he got to work on revamping its marketing strategy.

"I came in and I stopped all print advertising – no more newspaper, no more flyers. I never found them very effective because they were a huge cost and you couldn't measure anything. YouTube, Facebook and Google AdWords were the three main pillars and business was growing and people were saying they saw us. We tried to stay humorous, we tried to stay personable. It paid off," McMullan recalls.

"I try to keep it original because you can't put out the same ads as other retailers, you won't get the attention," he continues, "My goal was to build an emotional connection with our brand. 'Think local, shop local' was the ►

“If TikTok stays relevant, we’ll continue to grow our audience. I’d love to have half a million followers by the end of the year.”

While their TikTok account has brought inquiries from around the world and customers from across the country, the only place you’ll see the McMullan Appliance & Mattress delivery truck (seen here) is in the region immediately surrounding the retailer’s store in Smith Falls, Ontario.

focus of our ads. We want to be more of a destination, and I don’t use promotional messaging – we don’t talk about price or promotions. We focus on high-quality stuff, and we won’t sell anything that gives us a headache. I wanted to build a brand attachment to McMullan and increase awareness.”

HOW TIKTOK CHANGED EVERYTHING

In March 2020, TikTok wasn’t the only game-changer for McMullan. As everyone surely recalls, it was also the month marking the start of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its series of months-long, rolling lockdowns that actually increased consumer demand for furniture and appliances.

“Over the last three years, COVID changed everything when it came to appliances. Then of course the TikTok thing happened,” McMullan says, adding the new McMullan’s TikTok channel drew customers from far outside Smith Falls and sowed the seeds of new customer loyalty to the brand. “TikTok has changed things, people in Quebec and Muskoka are interested in us,” he noted.

McMullan says when he launched the channel, it was a slower time for the store and neither he or his father or brother had any idea what they were in for.

“We expected business to go down and it did the complete opposite. There was a three-week lull and then it wouldn’t stop. People were home and started hating their houses and wanting new appliances. We had more people move here and the housing market heated up and it was a perfect storm.”

While the store has certainly benefitted from the dramatic shift in consumer spending that

saw people funnel money typically earmarked for travel and entertainment into their homes, the brand’s extraordinary growth on social media also fuelled demand.

“Since TikTok, people are pre-qualified to us. They think that by coming here, they can’t go wrong. Because of TikTok, they feel like they know me when they walk in the door. There’s less intimidation, more familiarity.”

McMullan says by engaging viewers through funny, personable and ultimately informative videos – he takes the time to educate people on how to shop for dishwashers, refrigerators, grills and more – he comes across as a trustworthy source of information rather than a typical retailer trying to make a sale.

McMullan also lets viewers into his everyday life by showing them, for example, what happens when someone (his son) attempts to conduct an experiment involving cheese in an icemaker (spoiler alert: it makes a mess).

“[When customers come in], they’re not as defensive, and they smile and talk about what they see on TikTok. The amount of people promising to come here has me worried,” he says, laughing. “Every day, we get e-mails and phone calls that are TikTok-generated.”

Interestingly enough, McMullan’s TikTok account has led shoppers in the United States and other countries around the world to inquire about how to pick the best mattress or appliance.

“Seventy to 80 per cent [of our followers] are in the U.S. and the rest are from Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. People will call from Arkansas to ask us for advice on what to buy. When we talk about platform beds, we get a million requests from the U.S. to ship them,” he says.

While McMullan has certainly made a name for his store online, believe it or not he doesn’t have a huge e-commerce operation. In fact, his **Shopify** account only sells *Element* fire extinguishers, *Persil* detergent and water pillows.

“I had to set up a Shopify account to ship out fire extinguishers to the U.S.,” he says, adding a TikTok video demonstrating the effectiveness of the device (which was subsequently removed by the site for reportedly bumping up against safety standards) helped his store sell some \$40,000 worth of the device.

TikTok, McMullan says, has turned his store into a destination.

“A guy in Paris, Ontario got up at 4am in the morning to pick up a washer and he only wanted to buy it here. We get thousands of comments from people who want to shop from us. I’m very thankful for it,” McMullan says.

“TikTok has developed brand loyalty and the big shift in gears was when I turned the camera ▶



around. Because of my background and my confidence, once I started talking that changed the game a bit. People say the videos are authentic and that they like the authenticity and the humour,” he adds.

McMullan says when people travel from far away to visit him, he reminds them they can always purchase from their local retailers. That said, he knows the videos forge a sense of connection between his store and prospective customers.

“People go to that effort or expense because they trust me and think I’m authentic. I’m not out there promoting anything I don’t believe in.”

Aside from social media-driven success, McMullan is also enjoying a climate in which people are anxious and excited to purchase new products for their homes. “We have hundreds of thousands of dollars in open orders right now,” he says, adding the store is not immune to the supply chain crunch other retailers and manufacturers have been grappling with over the course of the pandemic.

“Vendors are doing their best and some customers get it and some don’t,” he says. But while demand is still strong, McMullan is seeing a bit of a shift in consumer behaviour.

“I’ve done a lot of grill content but people aren’t buying grills as much this year and I suspect people might be going away instead. Bedding is strong.”

WHAT’S NEXT?

While there’s no question consumers have taken notice of McMullan’s store, the social media giant hosting his videos is also intrigued by his success – as are a few other companies.

Recently, McMullan partnered with Electrolux and Napoleon to produce content for them and he’s also been tapped by TikTok Global to represent small businesses who have found success on the platform. “I filmed hours of content on that,” he says.

McMullan says the surge in demand driven by TikTok hasn’t been without its challenges.

“I’m not looking to become an influencer; I load trucks and deliver furniture. My dad’s overwhelmed and frustrated because at 72, he was shocked by how complicated things got with the volumes we were doing. He’s a typical independent retailer,” McMullan says.

“I think he sees the few videos we put on Facebook and I can tell he doesn’t know what to laugh at. I don’t get approval, but I get a lot less disapproval now. We’ve tripled business in three years. It’s like putting a turbocharger on a small car.”

When asked if the massive growth in popularity will force the brand to grow, McMullan says



his family is willing to embrace change but is ultimately happy with the store as it is.

“We have a great location where we are. We don’t want to be in a high-traffic area, we’re so busy and we close 70 per cent of what walks in the door. If someone drives here, they drove here for a reason. Our eyes are always open for something, but we’re not actively looking [to move] right now.”

McMullan says he intends to keep the videos rolling, adding the company can attribute roughly a quarter million dollars in new sales to TikTok. “It dwarves anything Facebook or YouTube ever did for us. I never spent a penny on TikTok, other than buying some supplies. I never spent a penny boosting posts. We probably advertise less than any retailer, we spend less than five per cent marketing our business,” he says.

“If TikTok stays relevant, we’ll continue to grow our audience. I’d love to have half a million followers by the end of the year. Appliances don’t break every day, but people say they can’t wait to shop here and it’s almost nerve wracking. We’ll grow and meet the demand.”

McMullan also says he’ll always be honest with his audience.

“I’m careful when I talk, I don’t make bold claims. I look at every single comment, I see where people disagree with me and if I’m wrong, I’ll admit it. I answer a lot of comments and that adds to the trust and authenticity factor. I have to charge my phone two or three times a day. I’m also always looking for new ideas and I won’t participate in a trend unless I can apply it to my business.” **HGO**

Corey McMullan, seen here in his family’s store, may be the Canadian mattress and appliance industry’s best known personality, thanks to his following on the short video platform TikTok, where he has almost 400,000 followers.

A contributing editor to HGO Merchandiser, ASHLEY NEWPORT is a Toronto-based freelance journalist who writes primarily for trade and business publications. Her specialties include food, hospitality and emerging social/business trends.

MATTRESS MATTRESS: *setting themselves apart*

Western Canada's largest independent mattress chain is looking to expand after experiencing a pandemic boom, by infusing lessons learned during the tragedy with its disciplined approach to both operating the business and interacting with the customer.

BY MICHAEL J. KNELL

An exterior view of the new Mattress Mattress store in the Gasoline Alley neighbourhood of Red Deer, Alberta. The store has a 2,600 square foot retail showroom as well as warehouse space



SINCE IT NOW APPEARS THE worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, Mattress Mattress is looking to grow, melding the lessons learned during the recent tragedy with the disciplined approach the regional mattress and bedding specialist has employed to drive its success since its founding back in 1994.

The family-owned and operated retailer recently opened its 17th store in Red Deer – in its second on the city where it got its start and a replacement for the unit it closed back in 2015. Eric Buchfink, Mattress Mattress (MM) founder, majority shareholder and chief executive, told *Home Goods Online* the company plans to open its 18th store in early 2023 in the Calgary neighborhood called Buffalo Run – right next to Costco.

In chatting with Buchfink, it becomes obvious almost immediately here is a man who thinks about his business and who has surrounded himself with a more than capable senior management team which includes his sister, Lori Fecho, her son Matt (who, by the way, was HGO's first *National Retail Salesperson of the Year* in 2017) and his son Chad. Lori – who originally drafted the retailer's well-known *Beducation* program – is MM's vice president of human resources and Eric's right hand. Matt is vice president of sales and marketing while Chad is vice president of operations and the company's import division.

In a wide-ranging exchange with the writer, Buchfink detailed what sets Mattress Mattress apart from its competitors – it's a combination of how they operate the business, how

they manage relationships with their employees and how they interact with the customer. Everything they do is designed to improve efficiencies and, ultimately, make money.

Indeed, MM has documented almost every aspect of its business, covering topics such as wide ranging as *Appearance is Everything*; *21 Ways to Sleep Better*; *How to Buy Radio and TV*; *Sales Rep Visits* (governing visits from each vendor's sales representatives) to *Buying Criteria* and *Corporate Expectations*.

OPERATING THE BUSINESS

Several things stand out about how Mattress Mattress operates. The first is its database, which was originally created by Eric's brother Richard back in 1998 – before computers became common tools used by furniture and mattress retailers.

"It was then completely rewritten in 2005 and has been continuously updated by the software writer ever since," Eric Buchfink said, adding the writer – who he describes as a "true software genius" and a minor share-

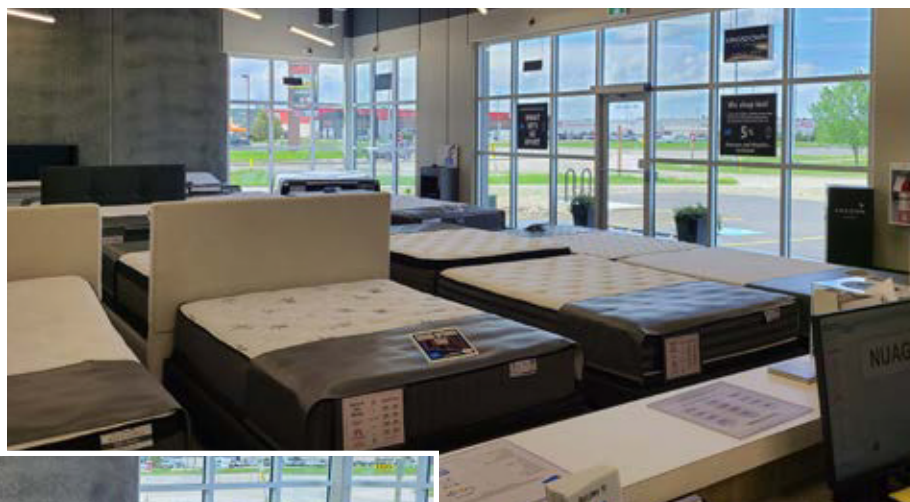
holder – holds an important position where he is responsible for maintaining the database used by Alberta Health Services.

"Our database is totally tailored to our business," he says, noting it creates "tons of reports, has a built-in re-order system and tracks inventory sales."

"I'm also the guy that brought floor sample discounts to the mattress industry," Buchfink claims. "No one ever asked before. Most recently, we've been able to take the normal 20% twice a year to 40% to 50% off all floor samples once a year from Canadian suppliers. We find that by using our disposable protectors on our mattresses, they stay fresh and clean for a year – and at 50% off, they clear quickly. And suppliers will often give us a new floor sample at another 50% off anytime they need to be refreshed sooner."

While Mattress Mattress is loyal to its suppliers, they also demand a lot from them in addition to discounts on floor samples.

The retailer is a shareholder in Mega Group, the co-operatively owned buying and marketing group based in Saskatoon. "Although that gives ▶



Above: A look inside the latest Mattress Mattress store in Red Deer. The mattress specialist is capitalizing on the consumer's current demand for adjustable beds.

Inset: Another look inside the newest Mattress Mattress outlet. Every customer who shops the store is given a disposable mattress protector to use when trying a sleep surface – a safety measure that reassures her the retailer is acting in her best health and safety interest during her visit.



us rebates and co-op funds that we'd be hard pressed to get on our own, we've also been able to carve out some additional perks on our own," he says, "such as contributions to our annual Christmas Party and golf tournament as well as additional co-op advertising funds and contributions to our website – and more."

Eric Buchfink has strong opinions about vendor sales representatives.

"I take exception to reps that never visit, and when they do they do nothing more than socialize," he says. "They're paid to look after us, and we make our reps work for us."

Every one of MM store managers is required to complete a report when a sales rep visits the store. The report is based on a checklist covering everything the rep is required to review during his visit. It runs from checking the condition of the floor samples, the state of point-of-purchase material, a review of outstanding customer service/warranty claims, back orders and sales/product knowledge training.

"A report card is then shared with their supplier if reps are failing," Buchfink said, recalling. "A good friend of mine complained our reports got him fired. As I told him, 'You got yourself fired. You were never seen in some of our stores more than three times a year. And when you did visit you never looked after customer issues, POP material, spec sheet updates, and more. You were more interested in talking about the hockey game the night be-

fore, having a coffee and leaving. We have a report we need you to adhere to – and you didn't."

MM expects a vendor's sale rep to visit each store ten times each year – which allows for bad weather in the winter and summer vacations, Buchfink noted.

The retailer also strongly believes in measuring performance – both its own and that of its competitors. Therefore, every MM location is visited by a mystery shopper every year – more frequently if needed. It is both a measure of the individual team member and the store itself.

"We've been shopping our people for years – at least once a year and more often for those who are underperforming – and it's always unannounced, which forces our people to constantly be at their very best," Buchfink says.

The biggest impact the pandemic had on how Mattress Mattress operates is the retailer's adoption of Zoom – the U.S. based video conferencing service. It has proved a major cost saver and efficiency enhancer for the 17-unit chain.

"We used to hold an annual manager's meeting," Buchfink says. "We would bring everyone into

Airdrie for a day. It cost most of them two days with flights or driving. We now hold a quarterly Zoom meeting. Instead of a full drawn-out day we can cover things in three or four hours – and our cost goes from thousands to a few hundred dollars for time spent.

No airfares, no hotel rooms, no expensive dinners, and our managers are happier as they don't lose time away from their stores and families."

Zoom also changed how MM's head office works. The senior management team meets via the service every Monday morning for two hours at most, working off an agenda drafted the prior week. "We're all much happier now. We're also better informed, the issues are dealt with," he notes.

COVID-19 also forced the company to take a long, hard look at their team's work-life balance. In the post-pandemic retail environment, MM has a smaller team, generally working fewer hours without losing sales and damaging profitability.

"Outside of two very high-profile locations where we have five associates working, all our other locations now close weekdays at 7pm," Buchfink says. "It gives our people more time with their families. The average work week is 34 hours and we found we can run our stores with three or four better associates instead of four or five with the odd weak associate that we kept because we needed coverage. It's a win for our people and our sales and almost a return to the 70's when we only opened one night a week and were closed on Sundays."

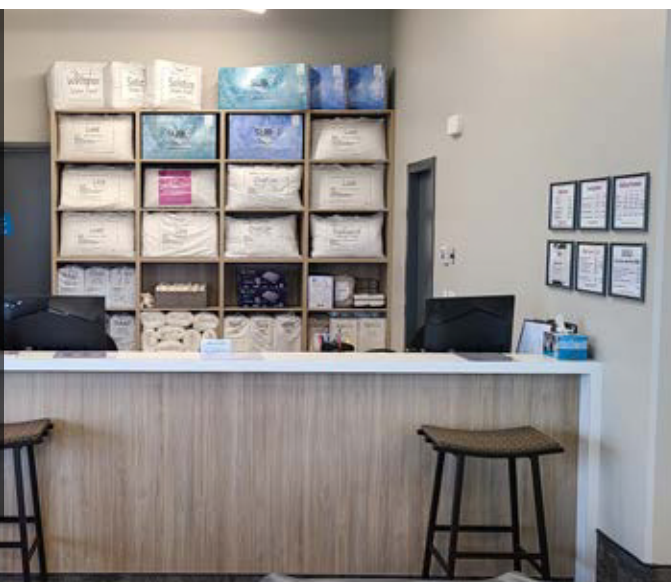
INTERACTING WITH THE CUSTOMER

As with almost every other aspect of their business, Mattress Mattress has documented the customer relationship from beginning to end.

The start is best represented by an MM document called *Appearance is Everything*. It covers everything from the appearance of the store – including the parking lot, sidewalks, windows, showroom floor, washroom and sales counter.

It also covers how team members are expected to dress for work. While it doesn't demand a return to the 1970s and 1980s – when stiff collars and ties were required for men and dresses with hems to the knees for women – MM's standard stresses clean and pressed with an emphasis on the team member presenting him or herself to the customer as a professional. ►

The sales counter in Mattress Mattress Red Deer. Every facet of store operations is carefully documented, include what happens here. If a purchase is made, before leaving the associate is required to ask how the customer came to shop in the store – whether she's a repeat customer, just drove by or found them on the internet.



Buchfink and his team have also developed what they call the *Vow to Wow Sales Manual*, which governs how team members interact with the customer. A big part of their approach isn't to sell a mattress, but rather to provide the customer with the information she needs to make a good decision. For example, each customer is given something called *21 Ways to Sleep Better* – providing tips and advice on how to ready the bedroom for sleep and suggestions on what to do, and not do, before going to bed.

This is all part of the company's *Beducation* program, which ends with Mattress Mattress' own internal 'no turn down' financing.

"I'm also a big believer in giving customers that leave without buying something to take away," Eric Buchfink, says citing Sears Roebuck as his inspiration. "In 1925 they produced their first catalogue and every customer that entered as Sears store back then left with one. Our current four-page handout costs less than seven cents and is given to every customer that leaves, along with a business card and price guarantee card.

"We give out about 25,000 a year," he continues, adding, "New ones when we start to run out are always updated. The new one for 2023 will include a few pages that talk about adjustable beds. I'm guessing the cost will go to about 10 cents each."

What's more, every customer who buys gets a thank you e-mail, with three attachments – including *21 Ways to Sleep Better*, mattress warranty information and an in-store experience survey. "If the customer completes the survey, the sales associate gets a \$10 Tim Hortons card," Buchfink says. "We generally get 50-plus of the surveys back each month."

MM also measures performance by asking customers to provide feedback. "We measure advertising by way of a counter survey with all customers that buy," he explains. "Our associates can't complete an invoice without getting the customer to tell us what most influenced their coming in to buy. Our database scores the results and we get a report titled WBYI (What Brought You In) Results."



Mattress Mattress recently opened a new flagship store in the Gasoline Alley neighbourhood of Red Deer, Alberta. To celebrate, Red County Mayor Jim Wood (centre right with scissors) cut the ribbon to mark the event. He's standing next to Mattress Mattress founder and chief executive officer Eric Buchfink.

A recent WBYI report revealed a third of Mattress Mattress customers were repeat ones while 22% stopped in after driving by the store and another 22% found the retailer on the Internet.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Next on Buchfink's agenda for Mattress Mattress's growth is a new store in Calgary, number 18, which is expected to open in early 2023 right next to the Costco Canada warehouse store in that city's Buffalo Run neighbourhood.

He is also very excited about the retailer's business moving forward. "The future looks bright," he exclaims, adding, "Our management team is more than capable of growing the company.

"We just came off our two biggest years ever," he continues. "COVID-19 drove in business and Mattress Mattress's increases beat all the industry numbers being published, and profits literally exploded."

Currently, MM is concentrated in Alberta where homes and accommodations are affordable. "That greatly increases disposable income. The same holds true in Saskatchewan, where homes have dropped in value since 2017," Buchfink points out, noting that while he predicted the collapse of oil prices back in 2014, he now predicts it never going down like that again.

"With the move to electric cars and other types of fuel options such as hydrogen, I believe the oil producing countries need to capture high prices

and profits, and to put these to work by investing in businesses that are going to replace some of the need for fossil fuels."

He's also of the view that with everyone cooped up for two years because of lockdowns, brick-and-mortar stores are going to have some solid years ahead.

"Just look at Leon's recent numbers," he says. "Despite an uptick in sales in the first quarter of 2022, they reported as major drop in e-commerce sales. Most of us love to socialize and brick-and-mortar experiences lend themselves to that – you can't really do that online."

Buchfink also believes the current upswing in inflation isn't going to hurt us in the long term. "Government needs it to increase their tax base to pay for some of their COVID spending. Inflation also drives up wages, which increases disposable income," he says. "As well, our industry never really faced supply issues like most others. All in all, I feel good about our industry."

To that end, he's looking not only grow his network of corporate stores, he wants to expand his licensee network and is looking for independent retailers to join the Mattress Mattress banner throughout Alberta and British Columbia as well as Ontario and Quebec. **HGO**

MICHAEL J. KNELL is the publisher and editor of Home Goods Online and all three of its platforms.

Crews from the local engineering firm VCT Group are seen here loading the needed materials to create the solar panels on to the roof of Tepperman's in Kitchener, Ontario.



POWERING KITCHENER

Tepperman's has installed a solar panel on the roof of its store in this south-western Ontario city – it's first ever. Combined with instore conversation efforts, it may well ween the store off the grid for good.

BY MICHAEL J. KNELL

SUSTAINABILITY HAS BEEN A BRAND promise for Tepperman's, the six-unit furniture, mattress, appliance and electronics retailer based in Windsor, Ontario for the better part of a decade. Indeed, the family owned-and-operated company has received numerous accolades for its efforts to increase its own environmental efficiency in recent years.

"For Tepperman's, sustainability is a promise and a commitment we make to create a healthier environmental future, driving us towards practices that ensure a better tomorrow," the company proclaims on its web site. "Sustainability is not an afterthought. It is part of our intentional demonstration of how we are addressing the climate crisis. Through both reducing our greenhouse gas emissions in alignment with the Paris Accord and by constantly reviewing our waste diversion options to keep as much material out of landfills as possible."

For Andrew Tepperman, the retailer's third generation president, nothing could be more ►

“Investing in our first renewable solar energy project is exciting. It aligns with our 10-year vision of helping to make our small region of the world a little better. We hope it inspires others to think about how we want our future to look and feel.”



intentional, more visible, and more impactful than shifting away from the electricity grid generated by Ontario Hydro to using renewable energy to power store operations.

Recently, they took the first step on this journey with the installation of 914 solar panels on the roof of their store in Kitchener, which will provide upwards of 95% of its electricity needs – and through additional conservation efforts may be able to power the store completely.

“Investing in our first renewable solar energy project is exciting. It aligns with our 10-year vision of helping to make our small region of the world a little better. We hope it inspires others to think about how we want our future to look and feel,” Tepperman told *Home Goods Online*, adding the return on investment for this project is about eight years.

He also noted planning the project took time and three of Tepperman’s six locations were considered for the project. Windsor and London were also in the running before Kitchener was chosen.

“Kitchener was selected due to the age of the building and the grid availability to accept the electricity that our panels will generate,” he explained. “Our solar installation will be a net-metering install; we will generate electricity and feed it into the local grid and that generation will be offset against our electricity consumption.

“At the end of the year, we will only pay for the 5% or so of electricity that we were not able to generate,” he added.

The installation was carried out by VCT Group, a Kitchener-based designer and producer of solar panels, EV charging stations and similar equipment. Their engineers carefully planned where the panels were to be installed, ensuring to account for shading from our higher roof structure and to ensure that there would be easy access to our roof-top HVAC units, drains and other infrastructure.

The process began in early May when a crane was used to lift all the needed materials onto the roof to start the construction process. Once the material was in place, the ►

A sea of some 914 solar panels covers the roof at Tepperman’s store in Kitchener, Ontario. The \$500,000 investment has an anticipated return on investment of about eight years and is part of the retailer’s long-term commitment to sustainability in every part of its operation.

“Our expectation is we will be generating electricity and feeding that back into the grid by the middle of August. We are thrilled to have this sustainability story to tell. We will always look for other ways to have a greater impact in the communities we serve.”

supports and ballasts were installed ready to receive the panels.

After the panels were installed, the crew installed and wired the inverters that will be used to feed the energy produced to the transformer and into the energy grid.

Tepperman reports the project is now in the commissioning phase. “Our expectation is we will be generating electricity and feeding that back into the grid by the middle of August,” he said. “We are thrilled to have this sustainability story to tell. We will always look for other ways to have a greater impact in the communities we serve.”

The retailer, one of the few of its size with a full-time sustainability manager, has several other environmental initiatives underway. The two best examples being the installation of courtesy electric vehicle charge stations at

every Tepperman’s location. Three have bee-friendly pollinator gardens including one at its London store covering some 25,000 square feet.

“If every Canadian retailer focused on this, we could move the environmental needle,” Andrew Tepperman believes, adding they were just short-listed by the London Chamber of Commerce for this year’s *Environmental Company of the Year* award.

BEING RECOGNIZED

Last year, Tepperman’s joined Green Economy London, one of seven Green Economy Hubs across Ontario. These groups were set up to support networks of local businesses set and achieve sustainability targets. The retailer was recently named its 2021 *Rookie of the Year*.

This wasn’t its first accolade. In 2020, Tepperman’s received the *Corporate Social Responsibility* award from London’s Chamber of Commerce. This award recognized Tepperman’s for creating responsible business practices in an economic, social, and environmentally sustainable manner, while making a positive impact in the communities where we live, work and play. The chamber presented the retailer with its *Environmental Leadership* award in 2018. ▶

This is another of Tepperman’s environmental sustainability projects, one of three pollinator gardens which can be found at three of its six locations



In 2019, it was given the *Corporate Environmental Achievement Award* from the Essex Region Conservation Authority.

Tepperman's also published its first-ever Sustainable Business report in 2020. It can be found on its web site – teppermans.com. The company also aims to divert 80% of all the

waste it generates away from landfill before 2025. In 2020, the last year for which figures are available, Tepperman's only sent 27% of the waste it generated to landfill – 52% was recycled and 21% was reused, primarily through the donation of used and returned furniture to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore organization. **HGO**

MICHAEL J. KNELL is the publisher and editor of Home Goods Online and all three of its platforms.

This is the support structure that will hold the solar panels on the roof of Tepperman's 70,000 square foot plant in Kitchener.



This inverter will be used to feed the electricity generated by the solar panels back into the grid. Tepperman's believes the panels will provide about 95% of the electricity it needs to run the store.



A look at the blanket of solar panels covering the roof of Tepperman's store in Kitchener.

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