

Friday, May 11, 2007

Trimag to close, 100 lose jobs

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About 100 workers will lose their jobs when an automotive parts plant in the Haley Station area closes at the end of this year.

The Trimag plant, connected to the Haley Industries building, is closing. Management is citing offshore competition and weak response from its major North American customer, General Motors, as the reason for its demise.

The plant, which has been operating for 11 years, builds lightweight magnesium parts for the auto industry. Initially it was founded as a joint venture with Haley Industries Limited and that company's building was expanded to accommodate Trimag's needs.

Trimag was sold to a third party in 2001.

"Since then, it is no longer affiliated with Haley Industries," said Jim Lemenchick, vice-president of finance for Haley, which is one of the world's leading light alloy and aerospace foundries.

"We own the building and our relationship with Trimag is that of a landlord and tenant."

The Haley Industries plant was constructed at that location, on what is now Magnesium Road, because of its proximity with the pre-existing Dominion Magnesium, now Timminco Metals. That company mined the magnesium found in the rocks there and processed it to provide material for the growing market for lightweight metals in the aerospace industry.

The Canadian government built Haley Industries in 1952 as part of its decision to support the design and manufacture of a Canadian supersonic fighter aircraft, the AVRO Arrow.

However, in 1959, the government made the decision to halt the Arrow project, a decision that is still being questioned and deplored by many, especially those with an interest in the aerospace industry.

Haley Industries is now wholly owned by Magellan Aerospace Corporation and has 540 employees.

Production from Trimag's Haley Station site will move to another of the company's plants at Boisbriand, near Montreal.

Haley Station is part of the township of Whitewater Region.

Whitewater's mayor, Don Rathwell, said that most of the displaced employees are people with young families.

"Trimag management assured me that they are excellent employees and that, if they wish to move, they would be happy to employ them in their Montreal-area plant," he said.

"My hope is that Haley Industries will be running full blast and will expand into that (the Trimag) area. Unfortunately, Timminco is not picking up. It has been on the slides for the last three years." Timminco, which once had 400 employees and in recent years operated out of a second location in the Greenwood area east of Pembroke, will soon be reduced to just 18 employees. Instead of mining magnesium which occurs naturally at that location, the company is now buying lower-cost magnesium in Asia.

Mr. Lemenchick would not comment on the possibility that Haley Industries might expand into the space that will be left vacant when Trimag pulls out.

"The information is so new, at this point we've made no decisions," he said.

"At this point all I can say is that we're losing a tenant."

Trimag's buyer in 2001 was Spectra Premium Industries of Boucherville, Que. which operates several plants in Quebec, Ontario and Nova Scotia. A management group backed by Quebec's giant Solidarity Fund bought the company in January of this year.

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