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Local food companies get boost in Federal-Provincial partnership



By Brock Weir

Agri-food accounts for over $37 Billion in Ontario's economy, employing over 800,000 people, and shows no sign of slowing down ? and both the Federal and Provincial government s are looking to ensure this economic engine remains well-oiled.

Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard was at Treasure Mills, the Aurora-based snack food company, to announce a significant infusion of Federal and Provincial dollars not only to Treasure Mills, but also Buddy's Kitchen, a local dog food company.

Treasure Mills and Buddy's Kitchen are just two of over 300 Ontario food and beverage companies that received a share in an $18 million investment through the Growing Forward 2 (GF2) program, a federal-provincial initiative.

Treasure Mills, through this funding infusion, will receive $90,235 for new equipment to increase efficiencies while Buddy's Kitchen will receive $19,999 to spearhead market research and analysis to identify opportunities for business growth.

?We value supporting business in communities like Aurora,? said Mr. Ballard. ?The Growing Forward 2 program is a joint Federal and Provincial initiative that is working in the food and beverage business to keep and hire skilled people, innovate ways to help with business and increase productivity. There were 300 projects across Ontario like yours that are helping companies advance their marketing research and analysis, buy necessary equipment to improve efficiencies, and become more productive.?

Treasure Mills, which produces nut-free and peanut-free snack foods that are designed to be ?school safe,? will use their portion of the investment for a new flow wrapper machine which will only enhance their reputation for food safety.

?The addition of these flow wrappers allows us to basically put a package and bag around snack cakes and products of that nature and the ability to improve and drive continued food safety, which is paramount in our business and our brand,? said Founder and CEO Robert Johnson. ?We're all about kids' safety and our goal is to be the most trusted brand in kids' snack foods. This investment goes towards that. Every time we have a person touching the product you have a risk of contamination and other issues.?

Peter Kauffman, founder of Buddy's Kitchen and self-described ?Chief Dog Wagger,? stressed the importance of these Federal and Provincial investments for any business.

?Success doesn't happen in isolation,? said Mr. Kauffman. ?As an entrepreneur who started in the basement 20 years ago, you don't think that government and the bank are going to be so valuable in terms of that partnership. You can't run your business without recognizing the valued assets that both the Federal and Provincial governments can provide. It is so critical for businesses, especially in the industry we're in: food.

?We're a next generation food company. We don't do pet food, we do food for pets. It is a paradigm shift. Pet owners are no longer just owning their dogs, it's a member of the family and Buddy's Kitchen is uniquely positioned, it is a very seismic shift in how people are spending on their dogs; just as much as they are spending on their children, they are spending on their fur babies. It is really remarkable and we're so pleased to be able to work with both levels of government.?