

# Muskoka **BUSINESS**

A14 EXAMINER-BANNER, Wednesday, December 20, 2006.

## GemThane ships first order

by Walter Franczyk

Bracebridge's newest industrial employer shipped its first order recently.

GemThane Siding and Wood Finishing Systems (Muskoka) Inc. coats wood with an industrial-strength finish that lasts longer than ordinary paints and stains.

Its first shipment of wood siding and trim was destined for a home in Toronto, said GemThane operations manager Jeff Sawrey.

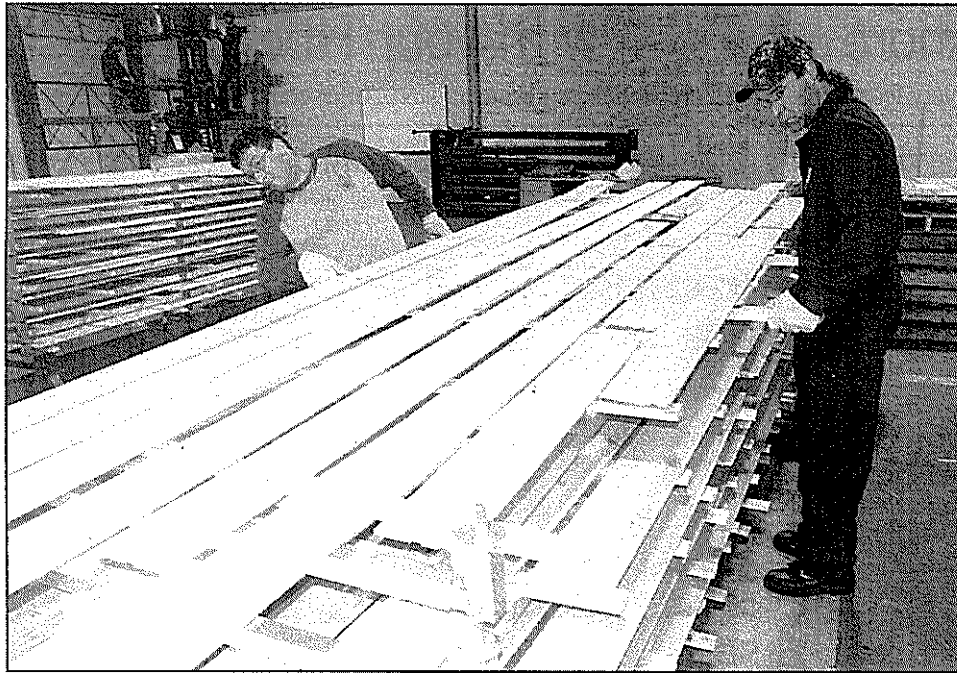
A division of Madison Chemical Industries Ltd., the company employs four people in a factory being assembled in the former Alcan plant on Muskoka Beach Road.

As a noisy crew assembled large, steel storage racks along one wall of the building, Sawrey supervised three men preparing unfinished wood siding for a spray application of polyurethane resin, a tough finish that resists abrasion and chemicals.

"We're building our first batch of inventory," Sawrey explained.

Once the resin is applied and the wood dried, the siding can be stored until a customer orders the product and specifies a colour.

The coloured topcoat is polyurethane, similar to the resins used to coat jet aircraft. It is formulated to look like ordinary stain,



**ANOTHER BATCH.** Keith Redpath and Sean Martin prepare wood siding for a protective coat of polyurethane resin at the new GemThane factory on Muskoka Beach Road in Bracebridge.

Photo by Walter Franczyk

but has tremendous weathering characteristics.

The GemThane crew was preparing to start on a second order — siding and trim for an 1,800-square-foot building to be built by NorStar Aluminium of Bracebridge.

"We can provide a customer with their order within a week or two," said Sawrey, explaining the industry average for

such service is five to six weeks.

Madison chief executive officer Ross Mitchell said he expects the factory to handle about 14 orders over the winter months, when wood finishes will be applied manually.

"We're not going to be running at full steam for a few months, so you don't want too much on the books at one time,"

Mitchell said. "One or two orders at a time is just fine."

The second phase of the operation will consist of a semi-automated conveyor system, spray booth and oven, to be installed by Annadale Finishing Systems of Cambridge.

"It should be up and running sometime in the spring," Mitchell said.

The company is still looking for a sales direc-

tor and expects to employ 10 to 12 people when it reaches full production.

Mitchell is happy with the employees the company has hired.

"The guys we got are really first rate," the chief executive said.

Customers who order wood siding for delivery to the end of January will get a discount, Sawrey said.



**TAKE YOUR PICK.** GemThane operations manager Jeff Sawrey displays samples of colour finishes available for the wood siding and trim produced at the company factory in Bracebridge.

Photo by Walter Franczyk