

Bringing in experience from the outside

Peter Diekmeyer, **Financial Post** Published: Tuesday, February 16, 2010

www.Victoriavillegroup.com Location Victoriaville, Quebec

Size 425 employees

Sector Manufacturer and distributor of funeral products, mostly caskets
Markets Canada, the United States and eight other countries

They say that there are only two certainties in life: death and taxes. If that's true, then Victoriaville Funeral Supplies may be in one of the more recession-proof industries.

"It's a hard sector to talk about," admits Alain Dumont, the company's president. "But it is true that the projected death rate, (which was recently revised downward), is a key indicator of future demand for our products."

Victoriaville Funeral Supplies, which bills itself as Canada's largest domestic manufacturer and distributor of funeral products, was founded in its current form by Alain Dumont's father's uncle.

Alain Dumont, who is from the third generation of extended family members to run Victoriaville Funeral Supplies, joined the manufacturing company after working first for several years as a chartered accountant.

It was an experience that he said proved invaluable.

"Joining a family business is a daunting task," Mr. Dumont says.

"There is so much pressure on you to perform. Bringing outside experience to the job does a lot to broaden your perspective."

Ironically, according to Mr. Dumont, much of Victoriaville Funeral Supplies' more recent success, which includes 18 straight years of sales growth, stemmed from a tragedy. Just over a decade ago, an enormous fire levelled the company's production facilities.

The Dumont family used the opportunity to completely rebuild its plant.

They invested a massive \$25-million in the project.

Since then, Mr. Dumont has continued to upgrade production facilities when needed.

For example, during 2006, the company invested a further \$5-million to relocate and modernize its paint system and to add two new assembly lines.

That said, the story isn't over yet. Mr. Dumont has three children of his own who could potentially bring the family business into its fourth generation.

However, like their father before them, all want to try something else first.