

# The Intelligencer

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## Making the cut for 150 years

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**Saturday magazine** - Chisholm's boasts two sawmills at its 25-acre Roslin location which produce about five million board feet of hardwood and softwood lumber for the construction and furniture industries

Lumber is the core of a family business here that has been helping build Quinte for 150 years.

But much has changed at Chisholm Lumber since William Fraser Chisholm purchased the flour/feed mill and sawmill on the banks of the Moira River in 1857.

"Our fathers wouldn't recognize how we do business and sell lumber today," said Doug Chisholm.

Chisholm and his cousin Paul Chisholm are co-owners and great-great-grandsons of the founder. They purchased the business from their fathers in 1981 and now represent the fifth family generation to run Chisholm Lumber. In fact, Chisholm Lumber is one of the oldest family-run lumber operations in all of Canada.

The company boasts two sawmills at its 25-acre Roslin location which produce about five million board feet of hardwood and softwood lumber for the construction and furniture industries as well as a planing mill, a Tim-BR Mart retail outlet and a newly-established custom home design and build division.

"This is a new direction for the company and a very important one as we grow," he said. "The building industry is booming and we want our share of the industry."

The company also operates two dry kilns and a wholesale lumber division in Tweed, selling hardwood to furniture manufacturers, moulding operations and distribution yards.

In January of 2004, the company's kilns in Tweed were destroyed by fire but they have since been rebuilt.

Chisholm Lumber is also a member of the Bancroft/Minden Sustainable Forest License where it gets an annual timber allocation for a small part of its timber requirement and also has extensive forest operations.

"You have to do a lot of things right to make it work," Doug Chisholm said of his family's business.

"If we were a building retail store alone, we wouldn't be in business. If we were just a sawmill, we wouldn't survive. But put it all together and you can make it work in today's global market."

The company is marking its 150th anniversary with a special one-day celebration Aug. 25, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Roslin mill site. There will be tours of the mill, a video presentation of its four operating divisions, refreshments, musical entertainment, displays and chainsaw demonstrations.

"Anybody is welcome to help us celebrate our family's special milestone," Chisholm said. "It's a day of fun and fellowship as we celebrate our 150th anniversary."

Chisholm Lumber has already provided an early present to the surrounding community to mark its 150-year

birthday. The company donated a building lot in Flinton and \$20,000 worth of building materials to help Habitat for Humanity, Hastings-Prince Edward, construct a home this summer.

He said the family believes strongly in the objectives of the organization and the commitment by volunteers to provide affordable housing.

Chisholm said the family business is considered a small player in the hardwood lumber industry in Canada - even though it's one of the oldest.

Its location in a small community north of Belleville but outside a major metropolitan area poses identity challenges in the industry, among other things.

"Being in Roslin, we still have to deal with fibre shortages and quality of our saw logs, energy costs which are a big chunk of our manufacturing costs and the U.S. dollar or rather the strength of the Canadian dollar," said Chisholm.

And then there is the China factor, he said, where its wholesale customers are being impacted by manufactured products coming in from the Far East.

"They are taking a bigger share of the market," Chisholm said. "These are all factors that we deal with daily but we hope to be here another 150 years."

He said the family business prides itself on quality, not quantity, "and that's what we're set up to do."

Chisholm said they are proud of how their forest management practices have changed over the past three decades "moving to a philosophy of sustainable yield."

He added the company also wouldn't be where it is today without the dedication of its 30-plus employees.

"About one-third of them have been with us more than 20 years and they know their jobs. We're fortunate to have that stable workforce," he said.

"On the flip side, we have provided a regular employment opportunity for an industry that is known for its economic cycles."

Paul Chisholm said the one constant for Chisholm Lumber over its 150-year history has been change itself.

"Our experience tells us if you are going to do it like dad did it, you won't be around," he said. "You have to change with the times and, to date, we have managed to do that successfully and we'll keep changing as the economic climate dictates."

The business will continue in good hands for many years to come, said the owners.

There are four members of the next generation - the sixth generation - already working in the operation. They are Peter Chisholm, son of Doug Chisholm; Brett, son of Paul Chisholm; and two cousins, Jordan Chisholm and Pat Cassidy.

"This generation now has the opportunity to take the business for the next 30 years," said Doug Chisholm.

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