



## A new site - a new start

Avid Cobourg watchers remained on the edge of their seats as they drove past 800 Division St during the winter of 2012. Cobourg Nissan was up to something but what? Seemingly little progress was being made at the construction site right up to the moving date of the first week in March and then Wham! a brand new auto sales building was in place. This butterfly emerging from the chrysalis was months in the making but it never seemed that way. Tyler Campbell and his crew of hardworking and loyal employees at Cobourg Nissan had achieved what appeared to be the impossible and moved lock stock and barrel on March 5<sup>th</sup> 2012 - a seamless transition worthy of a Las Vegas illusionist.



Tyler, pictured here, in his new office, had prepared for this day since he left school. After his education, in Cobourg where he was born and raised, he started in the automotive business at Thomas Motors, working with Bill Campbell. Starting near the bottom rung as a detailer he worked himself up to used car sales

in four years and then left for busier climes. Roy Foss, one of the larger GM dealers in the GTA needed a used car manager and he fitted right in. He stayed three years in Toronto. Jack McGee's GM dealership in Peterborough was the next stop, but he was still away from home in Cobourg. Wanting to come home he left the auto business but the auto industry came calling when he was asked to join Colin Conroy at Cobourg Nissan as the General Manager. He joined Colin but in the understanding that an ownership buy-in was a possibility. A couple of years later Colin offered to sell Tyler the business, and he was back in the thick of things with a vengeance. March 8<sup>th</sup> 2008



was the start of Tyler's ownership and he has certainly not looked back. Last year working with local business people, Bruce Dinner, Rick McGlynn and Hank Vandermeer he put together a deal that would see Cobourg Nissan move into the recently vacated Esso station at 800 Division St and sell his existing building and lot to the Toyota dealership next door. A win-win situation for all involved. With a move-in date set for February 2012 2011 was a very busy time. Working with the Town of Cobourg and other approving agencies plans were made and renovation of the Esso station started last summer. The last item to be moved over was the Nissan sign and on March 5th Cobourg Nissan was in operation at the new location.

In 2008 Cobourg Nissan sold 150 units, in 2011 they sold 253 units and doubled the used car sales. Put into perspective Nissan's nationwide increase in sales in that time was five percent, Cobourg Nissan's sales percentage was eight percent, three percent over Nissan's National sales, showing that something was going on at the corner of Division and Elgin. As he told *Business Times*, "I've brought a lot of business in through ten years of local contacts, and it's not just me I have a great staff; this is four years in the making." Cobourg Nissan has sixteen employees and twenty five percent of them have been with the firm for more than twenty years. His Sales Manager - Todd Smith has twenty-fours years under his belt and the Company's Controller, Terry Shepherd, is good for twenty-one.

Talking proudly of his new operation, he explains that the new site has 2.4 acres his old site had .9 acres. "And it's more convenient for the customer." The new site has eight hoists in the garage, the old one had three "Wait times for service are now less." He continues, "We also stock a lot more cars and now have a better selection, we only had room for eleven used cars on the old lot, we can now carry thirty-five." The new complex has also incorporated the car



wash that was part of the previous complex (Bruce and Ricks' Esso), but revamped the inside parts. "We now have 'envirosoft' foam brushes as opposed to the older style cloth - no more heavy banging from heavy brushes - and certainly no more license plates lost in the car wash! We spent a lot of money in there" boasts Tyler. "All in all I am very happy here" was his comment about the move when asked.



Looking around the new, and very crowded, lot one will see all but one of the Nissan cars that are in the Nissan catalogue. They may not be in the colour that the customer wants or have the extras needed but by means of inter-dealer exchange one could get those items within twenty-four hours. A special order item can take up to 6-10 weeks but there are not many

models that have to be on special order. The only Nissan model that is not on the lot has to be ordered online and that is the all electric (not a hybrid) LEAF. Any of the twenty-one other variants, in any one of the thirteen model lines, will be here. Tyler told *Business Times* that he is negotiating to get the rights to handle the new NV commercial series of utility vans so folks wanting a new rugged line of vans should keep checking in with the local Nissan guys.

As number three in the ranking of Japanese manufacturers Nissan definitely has to try harder to move up against the fierce competition of Toyota and Honda. Throw in the Korean Hyundai dealerships and that race is a hard one. To that end Nissan has established a goal of five to eight percent growth in market share. Achieving this will be tough but as Nissan has six completely new model redesigns planned for the next eighteen months life will be exciting and full for Tyler and the rest of his Nissan crew at Cobourg Nissan. With fuel economy being the number one criterion for most new car buyers they feel that with the *Versa*, *Centra* and *Altima* they can run with the big boys and still come out ahead. The big incentive offered by Nissan is a zero percentage car loan for eighty-four months. Looking around the empty showroom (the interview was conducted in the first week of being open at the new location) Tyler told us that the floor will hold nine models. So indoor shopping will be a large attraction for the customers of this dealership.

Even though Cobourg Nissan is subject to the Countrywide franchise and dealership restrictions the name 'Cobourg' still resounds in the community because of the various sponsorship arrangements. Tyler explains his policy: "We supply a van to the Community Care, we are proud of that. We spread our name around the Minor Hockey League teams and earlier this month we had a free car wash weekend to aid the 'Northumberland Services for Women'. I support charities that are near and dear to me and local as well."

Asked about his five year plan for the future, Tyler looks back at the short time he has spent in the automotive industry and then says, "I don't want to move again. Cobourg is my home and I'm here to stay. The future for dealership expansion is "dealer groups" I may want to move in that direction, but way off. Nissan likes to know that you are going to stay in the industry, dealer groups allow you to get bigger and Nissan likes them."