

Millions Are Being Invested in Nanaimo Industry. Where Does Your Business Fit?

More than \$30.5 million in federal funding was recently announced for 24 B.C. businesses and organizations, including two significant investments right here in Nanaimo.

Nanaimo Forest Products, which operates Harmac Pacific, is receiving \$5.5 million to install new equipment that will increase production capacity, improve efficiency and reduce costs. Niik Steel is receiving \$1 million to establish a new facility producing metal decking, flooring and other steel building components in Western Canada.

For most small businesses, the first reaction might be: Great news, but what does a multimillion-dollar industrial investment have to do with me?

Potentially, quite a lot.

Follow the Investment

When a large company expands, buys equipment or increases production, the economic activity rarely stops at its front door.

New equipment needs to be transported, installed, connected, maintained and serviced. Facilities may need electrical work, fabrication, security, communications, cleaning and safety upgrades. More production can mean more trucking, supplies, packaging, warehousing and employees.

And the opportunity is not necessarily a direct contract with Harmac or Niik.

An electrical contractor hired to help install equipment may need lift rentals. A fabricator may need specialized transportation. A construction contractor may require temporary fencing, portable facilities or safety supplies. A growing workforce may create demand for recruitment, training, catering or accommodation.

That is where smaller businesses can start looking for opportunity.

What Could an Existing Business Do?

A local electrical contractor could develop more industrial capacity and begin building relationships with the contractors that install and maintain manufacturing equipment.

A trucking company could explore flat-deck, equipment or materials transportation instead of relying entirely on its existing customer base.

A safety consultant could offer workplace training, site orientation, confined-space or fall-protection services to contractors working in industrial environments.

An IT or security company could pursue opportunities involving access control, cameras, networks, cybersecurity or communications for expanding facilities.

Even equipment rental, commercial cleaning, recruitment, bookkeeping and food-service businesses can find themselves somewhere in the supply chain when industrial activity increases.

The question becomes: Who is benefiting from the investment, and what will those businesses need next?

What About a New Entrepreneur?

Large investments can also reveal gaps that may support entirely new businesses.

Imagine a mobile industrial supply service delivering urgent fasteners, fittings, abrasives, PPE and other consumables directly to job sites. Or a specialized parts courier serving Duke Point and south Nanaimo industrial businesses where an urgently needed component can mean hours of lost production.

A qualified entrepreneur might identify demand for mobile equipment maintenance, welding and repair, industrial inspection, drafting and CAD support, specialized cleaning or contractor support services.

The opportunity does not have to be huge. A new business may find its niche by solving one expensive, recurring problem particularly well.

Don't Wait for the Invitation

The bigger lesson is to start watching where money is being invested.

Harmac's funding is intended to increase production capacity and efficiency, while Niik Steel's investment will establish new manufacturing capacity and strengthen domestic construction supply chains. Those changes can create activity around

them.

Smart businesses can research the companies involved, identify their contractors and suppliers, understand vendor requirements, make sure their insurance and safety certifications are in order, and begin introducing themselves before an opportunity is publicly advertised.

Not every investment will create an opportunity for every business.

But when millions of dollars start moving through the local economy, it is worth asking: Where does that money go next, and could your business be ready when it gets there?