

There's really something special about working for an island owned business. It isn't something you can see, or notice in wages. It's on a much more personal level, where you can have a deep satisfaction for what you do. Sometimes it's apparent, and sometimes you have to take a few steps away from what you're doing to really see what's going on.

As globalization runs its course, we're seeing big box stores such as Wal-Mart opening in even the smallest towns in the Canada and south of the border. Although there may not be an increase in demand or supply within the market, these companies continue to expand and force smaller shops to close their doors.

Home Depot, which is scheduled to open in October, is the latest addition to Prince Edward Island's big box economy. They recently had a job fair which attracted several hundred potential employees. With unemployment on the island leveling off at 11.2%, this must have looked like a miraculous feat to some politicians; but local businesses are learning to recog-

nize the truth behind the trend.

While Southport Home Hardware refused to comment, I managed to reach John Horreht, manager of Schurman's Building Supplies. Horreht explained that while his store is concerned about increased competition, it forces them to be better in many ways.

"We've had a Home Depot strategy team in place for the last year. You have to be prepared. We're not the first small group they've come into," explained Horreht.

It turns out Horreht and his team have really done their research. They are well aware that their new competition is a public traded company based in Atlanta, Georgia and in the last year they recorded 65 billion in earnings with an astonishing 12% net profit.

"You have to be in the top three," said Horreht. "Number one and two do very well, and three can get by, but after that it's almost not worth being in the business."

With a home depot opening every 48 hours and figures like these, the fact is that most island owned companies can't compete with this sort of hostile takeover. We can't afford major television commercials or in some cases, even small budget for advertising. In today's free market, we have virtually no protection from large corporations.

Though this scenario may be bad for businesses, competitive markets can be beneficial to consumers. It can lead to short term jobs and potentially lower prices all around the board, but at what cost? The opportunity cost could be quite astronomical to the public. Each job created in a dormant market, a job is lost on the other end of the spectrum. If this, then not that. It's a fundamental principle in microeconomics, and one we may all learn very soon.

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