BUSINESS

THE GAZETTE | MONTREAL | WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2005 | SECTION EDITOR: 514 987 2512

B
6 The Trading Day
7 Canada
8 U.S. & World
9 Tech Q+A

Las Vegas monorail adds to Bombardier's headaches, B8

TSX	Dow	Nasdaq	Dollar	Oil	Gold	Prime
9370.97	10,256.95	1983.07	79.87	$49.50	$426.70	4.25
-59.241	+5.25	+4.42	+0.21	-$1.42	-$2.80	UNCH

TECHNOLOGY

VINCENZO D'ALTO THE GAZETTE

Caroline Saulnier designed the Stag 4 ergonomic chair that has propelled her company, Synetik Design, a group of under-30s who specialize in workstations and acces

Seat gives Synetik solid footing

Success of chair surprised inventor

Product is 100-per-cent made in Quebec from concept to delivery to the customer

MIKE KING
THE GAZETTE

ST. JACQUES – Budding entrepreneur Caroline Saulnier doesn't want industrial workers' tasks to be a pain.

As part of her studies, the 2003 Université de Montréal industrial design graduate created an ergonomic chair made to cut down on knee and back injuries.

"I knew there was good potential for it," Saulnier said of the armless and backless chair she named the Stag 4. "We have a good niche."

The 25-year-old surprised even herself with how quickly her invention took off.

She launched **Synetik Design Inc.** in March 2004 to mass produce and market the Stag 4 as well as design and manufacture ergonomic workstations and equipment.

Based solely on a prototype of the Stag 4, Synetik secured about $10,000 in orders the first year with such major companies as **IBM Corp., Alcan Inc., Pratt & Whitney Canada Inc., Bombardier Inc.** and **Paccar Inc.**

There was another $40,000 worth of consultation contracts for 2004.

One was with the **Caisse Populaire Desjardins** in the Montcalm region where Synetik has its office and plant located midway between Mascouche and Joliette.

Alain Bérubé, assistant to the director-general at the main regional Desjardins credit union in St. Lin, said Synetik "did good work adapting our workstations, which gave interesting results."

This year, Saulnier is anticipating revenues of $700,000 – $135,000 of it from expected orders for at least 1,800 Stag 4 units.

She credits her "young, dynamic team" (all six employees are under 30) for the early success.

> "What would normally have taken four years to develop, we did in one."
>
> Caroline Saulnier

"We work fast and what would normally have taken four years to develop, we did in one," Saulnier boasted.

A proud point for her is that the product is 100-per-cent made in Quebec from concept to delivery to the customer.

Promotion has been mostly from Saulnier tirelessly knocking on doors of potential clients and attending trade shows like those held by the Industrial Accident Prevention Association, among others.

For example, Saulnier approached truck manufacturer **Paccar** in Ste. Thérèse.

Some of its employees have been using the Stag 4 since last fall to "very, very good" results, according to Sylvie Boucher, company health and safety director.

"For us, it's an ideal bench that puts assemblers in a good ergonomic position for working six inches to one foot from the floor," said Boucher, who plans to order more of the chairs as needed.

Please see SYNETIK, Page B2

No call for cellphone directories

Few Canadians seem to be interested

MIKE KING
THE GAZETTE

Need to call someone on their cellular phone, but don't have the number and wish there was a directory to consult?

Dream on.

Despite the proliferation of cellphones – approximately half of Canadians now have one – people don't appear in any hurry to have their numbers publicly listed.

"There doesn't seem to be a high demand for that service," said Marc Choma of the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association.

Please see CELLPHONES, Page B4

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Synetik | Device would pay for itself in 2 days of injury compensation

CONTINUED FROM B1

She also sees the chairs as a good investment because the approximately $525 price tag per unit would be paid off in what it costs to compensate an injured worker for one to two days.

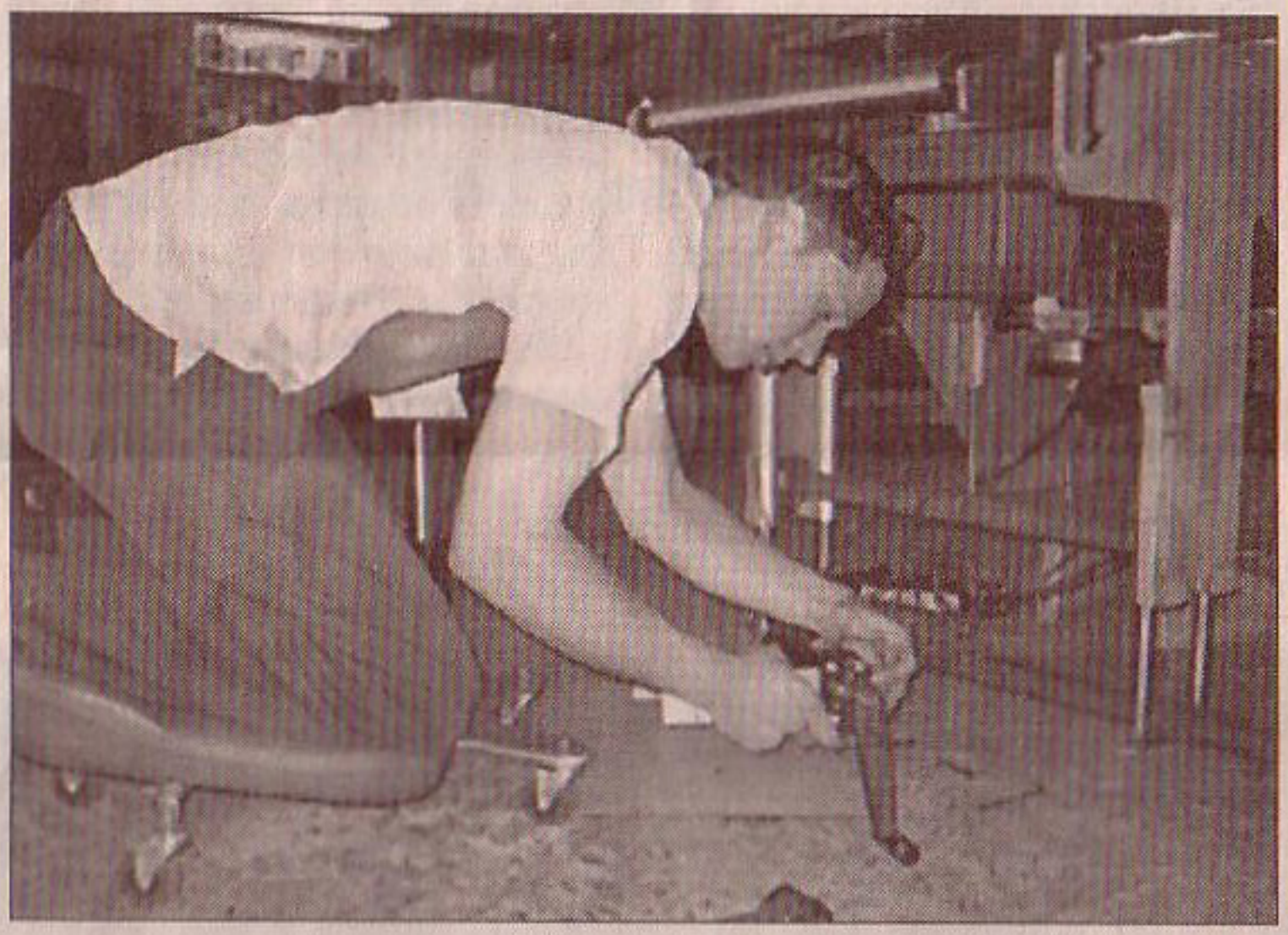
Éric Arseneault of the Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail said more than $500 million a year is dedicated to compensating workers suffering from musculoskeletal problems to their knees, ankles and lower back – which represent 38 per cent of professional injuries.

"It's excellent, a great product," noted Jeff Fame, operations manager of **Ergo Concepts Inc.**

The Guelph, Ont., firm will serve as one of four Synetik distributors in that province.

"I have some salespeople excited about the chair," Fame said, pointing to the potential immense market with Ontario's auto industry and vehicle service departments.

Synetik also has five Quebec distributors and Saulnier has an eye on the U.S. and beyond.



SYNETIK DESIGN INC.

Stag 4 enables workers to adopt different positions, such as low to the ground.

Around the globe, "comfort for workers equals efficiency for employers," Saulnier stressed.

"But we don't want to build our business on one product," she said of the Stag 4.

That means placing emphasis on other areas, like project planning and management, innovative shape and design research, conceptual development and further ergonomic design.

For more information, visit www.synetik-di.com or call (450) 839-2400.

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