

Versailles Celebrates 25 Years With Promise of More Growth

BY JILL ROWEN

MONTREAL — Versailles Home Fashion Inc. is celebrating 25 years in business, but its eyes are set on the next 25.

Known for its range of drapery hardware — including some patented designs — the company is ready to expand into bedding and other fashion areas, according to Robert Gibbons, president.

"We feel we have good access to retailers and are looking for diversification into other categories," he said. "We are currently looking at new products and have all kinds of options." Bedding will be first on the agenda, with more details as well as more category announcements expected later in 2012.

After a working as a buyer at Eaton's department store, Gibbons eventually bought two of

Canada's prominent window covering and hardware distributors and landed in the window business in 1987. Partnering with Harvey Levenson of Commonwealth Home Fashion soon after, a company with solid synergy was born.

Though they operate completely separately, the two companies share showroom space and even salespeople. "If someone is buying a panel with a particular color grommet, we'll always have the right hardware to showcase with it," Gibbons noted.

Through the past 25 years Versailles has designed many unique and patented products, and is a major developer and importer/distributor of drapery hardware, including wood and metal decorative rod sets, natural bamboo window products, tie backs, holdbacks and other home acces-

sories from several international sources. Its well-received cordless bamboo products were a direct result of listening to the marketplace where cords were considered a danger for children.

Twenty-five years is enough time to see the window business go through significant changes, and Gibbons said two things were particularly important in changing how Versailles does business. "Department stores were king of the window coverings way back when," he noted. "Now it's specialty stores, independents and DIY retailers like Home Depot that are the big players, in addition to the dot-coms."

Style has also made an impact, Gibbons said. Back in the day, drapery was often a corded draw drapery on a white metal rod that covered the entire window. That look changed

to the now-fashionable ready-made panels that rule the business. The new style gave birth to decorative hardware market. It's a style that is serving the company well.

"2011 was good for us in the U.S. and I don't see any slow down," he reported. "We antic-

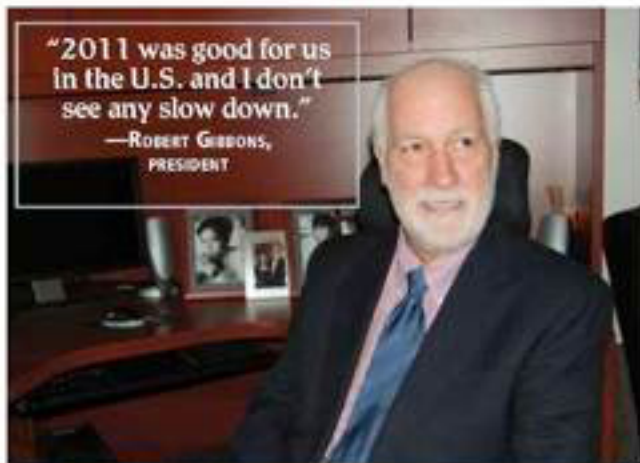
ipate growth in 2012, with a range of new products, and expect to see better economic growth in our own Canadian backyard."

Versailles has a New York Showroom at 261 5th Ave. and its head office in Montreal.

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—ROBERT GIBBONS,
PRESIDENT



Versailles' headquarters.



Versailles' showroom in New York.

