

Selling trucks, building relationships

Peterbilt Manitoba Ltd. dealership rolls toward 45th anniversary with eye on future



Made in Manitoba

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Anyone who wants to understand why Doug Danylchuk owns a truck dealership can find a stack of reasons in the closet in his office.

The owner of Peterbilt Manitoba Ltd. pulls them out — issues of trucking magazines from the 1960s and '70s he read as a child. He points to an ad for a Peterbilt distributor in Illinois called Stahly Truck City, an ad that features an aerial shot of dozens of trucks parked on the lot of a well-maintained dealership.

Ads like this one made an impression on Danylchuk before he was a teenager and gave him the idea that maybe someday he could distribute Peterbilt trucks, too.



The Winnipeg company's headquarters at 1895 Brookside Blvd., across the street from where it was established more than four decades ago, (Mike Deal / Free Press)

"I'd see a picture of a dealership down south and I'd think, 'That's something I want to have,'" the 65-year-old recalls. "I just loved trucks because I grew up around trucks. That was my calling. I've been at the dealership for 43 years and I still love it every day I come to work."

Founded in the United States in 1939, Peterbilt Motors Co. has operated as part of Paccar Inc. since 1958. The company is based in Bellevue, Wa.

When Danylchuk was a child, his father Ed owned a few Winnipeg businesses, including a truck stop on the west side of Brookside Boulevard. Doug pumped gas at the stop after school, enamoured of the trucks and taking a special interest whenever someone pulled up in a Peterbilt.

"You didn't see that around here a whole lot," Danylchuk says. "They were a step up from what I was used to seeing."

After high school, Danylchuk started driving trucks for his father's transport business.

In the late 1970s, a newspaper ad caught Ed Danylchuk's attention. Peterbilt was looking for someone to open its first-ever Manitoba location. He responded to the ad and was awarded the franchise. In April 1981, he opened Peterbilt Manitoba as a full-service dealership next to his truck stop.



'I hold my head very high when I say I sell Peterbilt trucks,' Peterbilt Manitoba owner Doug Danylchuk says of the Winnipeg-based business his father established in 1981. It also has locations in Brandon and the RM of Springfield. (Mike Deal / Free Press)

Doug Danylchuk was with him from the start, working in just about every role imaginable and learning the details of the business along the way. By 1987, he was the dealership's general manager; 10 years later, he purchased Peterbilt Manitoba from his father.

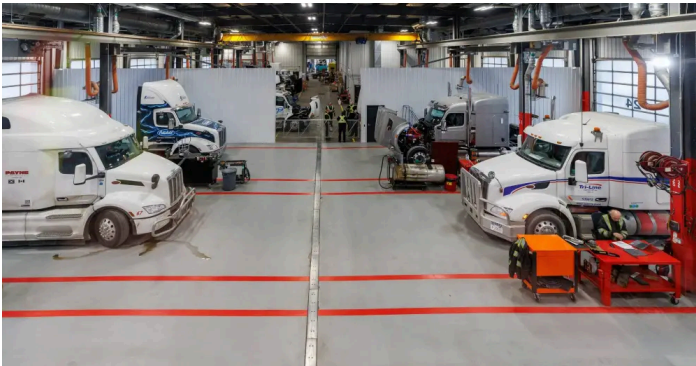
Today, Peterbilt Manitoba is headquartered at the intersection of Brookside Boulevard and Inkster Boulevard, across the street from where it first started.

The business sells the full line of custom-built Peterbilt trucks. Over-the-road conventionals, vocational trucks, medium-duty delivery vehicles — customers can find every model that bears the Peterbilt red oval in Winnipeg.

The company's service and body shop departments will repair all makes and models of medium- and heavy-duty trucks.

The business has two other locations: a parts and service location east of Winnipeg in the Rural Municipality of Springfield and a full dealership in Brandon. The company employs more than 140 people.

Danylchuk won't disclose the company's annual revenue or how many trucks the dealerships sell in a year, but he talks at length about how much he appreciates his employees — some of whom have been with the company for more than 40 years, and a few of whom work alongside their children.



A look down onto part of the workshop at Peterbilt Manitoba. (Mike Deal / Free Press)

"That's important to me — the longevity here," Danylchuk says. "Our customers know they can pick up the phone and call that person, because that person works here and has always been here."

Selling and servicing trucks, Danylchuk says, is ultimately about building relationships. The most gratifying part of his work, he adds, is when he can help someone, especially if they're stranded on the road.

"I know what it's like if I'm travelling," he says. "If you need help and you've got no help, you get very frustrated and you can feel very alone."

Danylchuk recalls answering a phone call around 8:30 a.m. on Christmas Eve six or seven years ago. A staff member from a local trucking company was on the line.

They had a truck that had been repaired at the Peterbilt dealership in Regina and, for whatever reason, the driver hadn't been able to pick it up before the dealership closed for the holidays.

The trucking company employee wanted to get his driver home to Winnipeg in time for Christmas. The employee asked if Danylchuk knew anyone at the Regina dealership that might be able to get the driver his vehicle.



Service technician Colin Pitzel works on a truck engine. (Mike Deal / Free Press)

A few months before, Danylchuk had connected with the Regina branch manager, so he called him. When he didn't pick up, Danylchuk started making calls to other people he knew in the Peterbilt network who might be able to help.

At 2:30 p.m., the branch manager called back. Danylchuk explained the situation and the manager told him, no problem — if the driver met him at the dealership in 30 minutes, his truck would be ready to go.

The trucking company employee in Winnipeg was elated his driver would be home for Christmas, Danylchuk says.

"He says, 'And by the way, I'd like to know what your name is and what you do there,'" Danylchuk says. "'Because I'd like to phone the owner and let him know what you've done for me.' And I said, 'I am the owner.'"

The man was astonished, Danylchuk recalls.

"He says, 'You did this for me on Christmas Eve and you're the owner?' And I said, 'It's my job. This is what I do.' Being able to help a customer like that makes me feel good. That's huge."

For Danylchuk, there's a lot of pride in being a Peterbilt dealer — in living out a dream that started more than 50 years ago when he was flipping through trucking magazines.

"I hold my head very high when I say I sell Peterbilt trucks," he says.

That pride has only increased in recent months with Paccar's announcement, as a result of U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs, all heavy-duty trucks destined for Canada will be built at the company's manufacturing plant in Sainte-Thérèse, Que. (The plant had only been producing a limited range of lighter trucks.)



Body shop technician Arvinder Singh works on a damaged truck. (Mike Deal / Free Press)

"People that buy trucks in Manitoba need to know that our trucks are built in Canada," Danylchuk says.

"Hopefully, they would consider a Canadian-built truck."

Looking ahead, Peterbilt is changing with the times by offering alternative fuel options, including fully electric trucks. The company is also developing hydrogen fuel cell trucks.



Peterbilt Manitoba's awards cabinet (Mike Deal / Free Press)

Every day is a new day, Danylchuk says, with new challenges to tackle, new ideas to pursue and new relationships to build. "I like to make things happen," he says. "It doesn't feel like work. This is just my life."

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