

# Kandola wins top award

If anyone in Prince George is qualified to speak about the problems facing the city's downtown, it's the Chamber of Commerce's business citizen of the year.

Ray Kandola came to Prince George in 1967, starting out as a delivery driver for a local furniture store. Little more than a year later he was selling on the floor. In 1976 he left to pursue his dream to open his own store - and City Furniture was born.

Since those humble beginnings from a single downtown PG store 14 years ago, City Furniture has grown to 15 stores throughout British Columbia. But Mr. Kandola never left the city he loved and just last year opened up the high-end RK Furniture to bring a touch of class to Prince George. He was awarded the 1997 B.C. Business Excellence Award for new Canadian entrepreneur and was nominated once before for PG business citizen of the year. And he still maintains his original downtown location of City Furniture on Second Avenue.

Mr. Kandola has raised three children - all daughters - in the city and been involved in local soccer and community events. And he is in the unique position of managing a chain of stores in other B.C. cities, so he knows the state of downtowns across the province. And he knows what's wrong with this one.

"I was in Kamloops last weekend and I was amazed. Their downtown was just as bad or worse than ours 15 years ago. All they've done is clean up the downtown and put in more lights," says Mr. Kandola, who sits on the Town Centre Business Association and Downtown Parking Commission. "All the small specialty shops are downtown, not in the malls there."

"I'd like to see something of that nature here. Downtown survives on specialty stores and that way you have local people owning and operating and the money stays in the city. These small stores are more important to me than big stores, but before that happens we have to clean (the downtown) up."

The current flap over the arrival of big box stores like Costco and Superstore doesn't bother Mr. Kandola. Each one has their own special niche, he says, and the services offered by an impartial juggernaut can't match the services offered by a locally-owned store like his own. In fact, the arrival of the Brick furniture store downtown turned out to be a boon for City Furniture.

"The best thing that happened to us was when the Brick moved in downtown," says Mr. Kandola. "If people can't compare you to another store they don't know they're getting a good product and a good price. Most people have this illusion that big stores always have better prices and products."

Despite seeing the need for change in the downtown



Roy Kandola started with a single location, but that has blossomed to 15 stores across B.C.

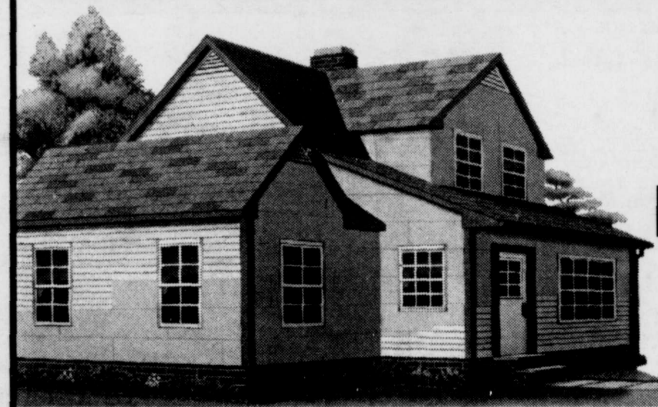
where he's worked for 33 years. Mr. Kandola's faith in Prince George as a community is unshakable. His roots run deep and even after offers from other companies early in his career he stuck with the city. Even now he acknowledges opening a higher-end store like RK Furniture during a

slumping economy is risky, but he believes the city will rebound.

"We are a part of the community. My family is here, my kids were born and brought up here. I think Prince George is a great community not only to live but to raise a family."

Doug Brown/Free Press

## \$AVE ON RISING FUEL COSTS



AND ADD  
COMFORT &  
RESALE VALUE  
TO YOUR  
HOME!

New siding adds beauty and resale value to your home. Residing insulation adds comfort and energy savings.

One inch of CodeBoard Insulation can SAVE UP TO 12% on your heating costs.

**W.R. VENTURES'**  
**WEATHER BEATER**  
**SIDING / INSULATION**  
**PACKAGE** Good Value at \$4597.00

Includes: vinyl siding, 1-inch CodeBoard insulation, soffit, fascia, eavestroughing, (2) gable vents, dryer vent, light & plug plate covers, all accessories.

**\$3,988<sup>00</sup>**

\* Based on a standard 1000 sq. ft. home. GST extra. Removal of existing siding extra. F.O.B. Prince George.

**6 MONTHS**  
**FREE**  
**FINANCING O.A.C**

**W.R. VENTURES CONSUMER PROTECTION PLAN**

- 5 Year Workmanship Guarantee
- Limited Lifetime Warranty On Siding
- Workers Compensation (all workers)
- Liability Insurance
- All Quotes In Writing



A NAME YOU KNOW AND HAVE TRUSTED FOR OVER 30 YEARS

**W.R. VENTURES LTD.**

1750 Quinn Street (next to Spruce Capital Feeds) • Prince George, BC • Call for your FREE estimate today 562-9551  
Out of town call Toll Free 1-888-847-4442 • Mon-Fri 8:00am - 5:00pm • Saturdays 8:30am - 12 noon

## P.G.S.S. Art and Craft Sale

Nov 4, 10-5  
Nov 5, 10-4

High Quality, One of a kind  
Arts and Crafts from the  
Northern Region  
will be on sale.

**Free Draw  
Concession**

Fund-raiser for  
the Prince  
George  
Secondary  
School  
Athletics Club

