Entrepreneurial Innovation - Supporting Covid-19
The relationship between government and business is an interesting balance. Policy creates the environment for doing business. Businesses partially fund the government through taxes, move the economy with employment and innovation, and lobby for policy. The wheel goes round and round.

Then a crisis hits and everyone scrambles. Governments and businesses. The economy slows, people are out of jobs and, in this case, medical precaution, and specifically, access to medical supplies is critical.

Governments are doing their best to step up, but they can’t do it alone.

That’s where the entrepreneurial spirit can help.

The supply for certified masks for frontline medical workers and first responders has been shrinking and more difficult to access. Shipments overseas are delayed and take time.

Kevin Puloski, President of Pund-IT Technology consulting, Director with Mountain Valley MD (CSE: MVMD) Life Sciences, operating out of Kitchener, Ontario and member of the Entrepreneurs Organization Southwest Ontario (EO SWO), saw a need for locally sourced materials, and locally manufactured masks. He researched material specifications for an Ontario based manufacturing setup and contacted one of his clients from Pund-IT, a world renowned manufacturer of sports and safety equipment.

Steve Wagner, owner of Barbarian Sports Wear Inc., and Salus Marine Inc. has worked with leading manufacturing companies around the world like Cooper, Bauer, and Nike for Hockey Equipment and saw the opportunity with Kevin, to transfer that experience to the world of medical supplies.

While they started out trying to solve the problem of getting an N95 equivalent type mask to the front line, they quickly realized that there needed to be much more testing and buy in from the medical community.

They reverse engineered the specifications and designed an innovative 3-Ply mask. Not only are the materials locally sourced and made, they have added style with design and options for printing on the external shell. The goal of this is to create masks that appear friendlier
compared to the scary look of the medical masks, while protecting both employees and customers. More importantly, they designed a mask that is reusable, not disposable.


The company was created in 3 days, manufacturing within one week, and are now working with the Ontario Medical Joint Task force and McMaster University. They are testing for medical applications to determine how effective the reusable masks are.

They had ~5000 units ordered on the first day, and have started production!!

![Production Image]

By creating a local supply chain for these masks, lead times for Canadian orders of masks will drop dramatically, medical teams can be confident with the certifications of the product, and Canada can become self reliant to serve the needs of front line medical staff and first responders. Keeping the heroes of this crisis safe is a critical priority for our country and all of their families.

While also keeping the design and style in mind, in hope that this helps put people at ease and might bring a smile to their faces as they continue to pick up essential items.

Barbarian Sports Wear continues to explore other PPE items such as Gowns, Barrier Curtains, and Body Bags.

“We’re all in this together, it’s time for everyone to help where they can.” said Puloski.

Necessity is the mother of invention and the spirit of entrepreneurship is stronger than ever in the Region of Waterloo.

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