

Green windows bring Baldacci to Belfast

By Ethan Andrews | Oct 08, 2010



(Photo by: Ethan Andrews)

Gov. John Baldacci, right, at podium, addresses a crowd of plant workers and city officials at the Mathews Brothers factory in Belfast Oct. 1. Baldacci visited the plant for the unveiling of a new line of energy-efficient windows.

BELFAST — Gov. John Baldacci toured the Mathews Brothers window-making factory Friday, Oct. 1, to help the longtime Belfast manufacturer cut the ribbon on a new line of super energy-efficient windows.



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More than 150 people attended the event at the Perkins Road facility, including factory workers and city officials. Afterward, attendees took a tour of the facility where some test models of the new windows were being fabricated.

The new product has been touted as creating green manufacturing jobs, and on Friday Robert Maynes of Mathews Brothers was optimistic, but in light of the uncertain economy, was cautious about making predictions.

"How many green jobs? I don't know, 10 to 12 this year," he said. "Ask me again in 20 years. I'm pretty confident it will be more than 10 or 12."

If Maynes was unsure of the number of new jobs, he seemed comfortable with the staying power of the 156-year-old company, which he called the oldest window manufacturer in North and South America. The claim elicited some gasps from the crowd.

"Before the Civil War, we were making windows. We have survived two great depressions, including the recession we're currently enjoying today," he said. "In short, we are window people. It's in our blood. We've been doing it for generation after generation after generation."

Baldacci seized on the example of a successful family-owned business, comparing it with the Bangor restaurant owned by his family in which he worked as a boy.

The governor called the Mathews Brothers factory the cleanest he had ever toured. He complimented the company as "the gold standard when it comes to windows and doors," and painted a picture of Mathews Brothers as an important part of the social fabric of the community.

"It's the people you have, and you know that," he said. "You work well with each other and treat each other well. It's not how it

happens overall."

In addressing climate change, Baldacci said there had been disagreements about the benefits of wind and tidal energy generation, "but there's no disagreement about energy efficiency and weatherization," he said.

Mathews Brothers designed the Clara Starrett EnergyCore window to meet the stringent requirements of the federal Department of Energy's "R-5 Window Program," named for the R-value insulation rating given to building materials.

The higher the R-value, the less heat is transferred, which translates to better insulation. The R-value required to meet the DOE's Energy Star rating for windows, by comparison, is 3.5.

The extruded vinyl EnergyCore window frames are filled with the company's proprietary porous synthetic insulation and come with two or three panes of glass space over the unusually wide depth of 1.2 inches. The larger air space translates to less heat loss.

Also in attendance at the event were David Petratis and Brent Korb of Quanex Building Products, a Houston-based company that sells several Mathews Brothers products. The executives had traveled from Texas for the ceremony.

Petratis lauded the EnergyCore window as "one of the greatest products for fenestration in the world."

After the presentation several groups of guests toured the factory where workers wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the cryptic formula "R=1/U" (R-value is the inverse of U-value, a similar heat-transfer rating system) were hand-glazing wood-frame windows, much as they would have done when the company started more than 150 years ago.

In another part of the factory, a pair of workers assembled test models of the new EnergyCore windows.

Mathews Brothers President Scott Hawthorne said the company was planning two or three local test installations of the new windows, including one in Belfast — a worker in the factory said they would be installed in the Shrine Club. Hawthorne said the company was planning an official commercial launch for the EnergyCore windows Feb. 2.

Mathews Brothers produces around 100,000 windows per year, and Hawthorne said it was too soon to know what effect the new windows would have on the company's annual volume of production.

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