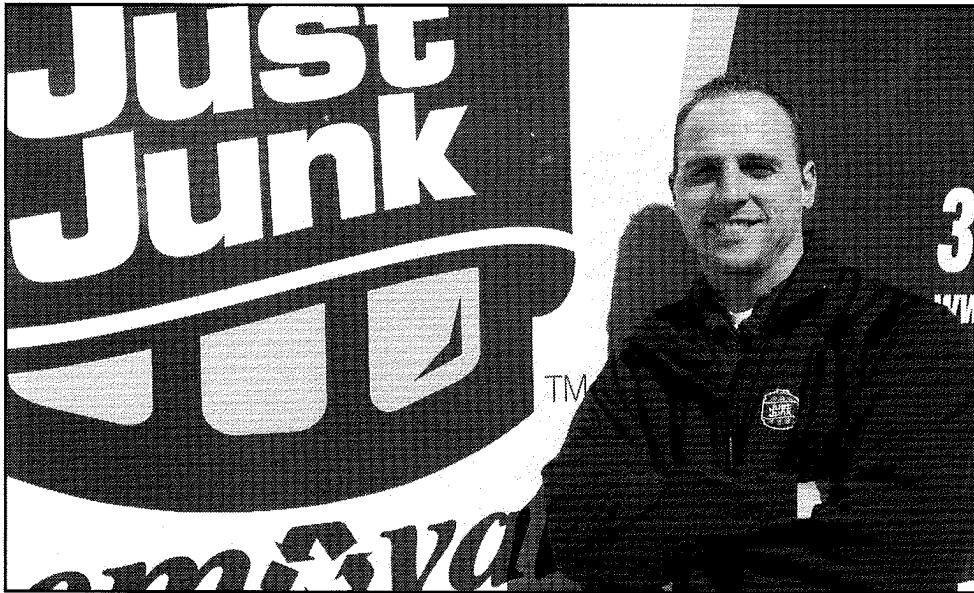


## Business Feature



Just Junk president Mike Thorne with one of the new trucks which are servicing the Hamilton franchise, which was started last month.

MIKE ZETTEL/BUSINESS TIMES

# Just Junk on the grow

BY MIKE ZETTEL  
BUSINESS TIMES

ST. CATHARINES — It was just a little more than three years ago that Mike Thorne started his full service debris removal and management company in St. Catharines, but already Just Junk has served more than 8,000 customers in the Niagara region and built up a solid repeat customer base.

And now Just Junk is expanding into new territory with a new franchise in Hamilton, which opened March 1. Don Freeman, the Burlington-based businessman who purchased the right to the Hamilton franchise territory, also owns the rights to the markets in Burlington-Oakville and Mississauga — some 1.7 million people.

But Thorne, president of Just Junk, said they're not stopping there. "We kind of look at it as one per cent of the way there," he said. "We have very big, aggressive goals. We feel they're achievable."

The way Thorne sees it, the business can only grow. For one thing, there's a lot of junk out there. If you think about it, he said, everyday thousands of trucks are delivering goods to the Wal-Marts, Zellers and Best Buys across the country, and the nature of what we're buying today means many of these items will need to be replaced in five to 10 years.

It might not be a high compliment, but people are throwing away more and more.

"Because it's a throw-away society, people are not taking their TV to get repaired anymore,

they're buying a new TV," Thorne said.

Much of that will end up in landfills, and even if someone prefers to divert the stuff away to organizations which will find a way to reuse them, he or she may not know who to call.

Just Junk was born Sept. 1, 2003, and right away, Thorne said, the company began documenting everything it does to determine how the business can be approved, how things can be streamlined and how to be more efficient.

One way is to divert as much as possible from landfills to avoid disposal fees. Thorne said about 60 per cent of what Just Junk hauls away is sent to Goodwill, Habitat for Humanity, steel yards and paper recycling facilities.

They've developed operations manuals, marketing tools, contacts with real estate agents and property managers, uniforms and a call centre in St. Catharines, which Just Junk intends to be the dispatch location for all its operations.

The intent, Thorne said, is to offer for sale to franchisees a proven concept, or "secret recipe" — a set of instructions which, if followed, all but guarantees success without the trial and error they went through.

"We're really trying to professionalize the industry," he said. "We're trying to build the business so it's extremely simple for the customer to get rid of anything that they have on their property. We want to make it as easy as ordering a combo number five from McDonald's."

For more info visit [www.justjunk.com](http://www.justjunk.com).