



Gov. Timothy M. Kaine, Bengt Danielsson, president of Swedwood North America, Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors Coy Harville and Bruno Winborg, Chariman of the Board of Swedwood International, ceremoniously saw a log in half at the inauguration ceremony Wednesday in Ringgold.

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A year and a half after it was announced, the Swedwood manufacturing plant officially opened its doors Wednesday at Cane Creek Centre in Ringgold.

Instead of a ribbon cutting, Gov. Timothy M. Kaine, along with Swedwood officials in Swedish tradition, ceremoniously sawed a log in half, marking the inauguration of the 930,000-square-foot plant.

“Sometimes people hear about globalism and think ‘what are we going to lose next?’” Kaine said. “Globalism is also about winning, and so many of the announcements we’ve done here in Danville are foreign companies wanting to come to the United States. ...There isn’t a reason we have to be afraid of globalism.”

Swedwood is the manufacturing division of the popular IKEA home furnishing chain. Hugely popular in Europe, IKEA has been making inroads in North America over the past few years. There are presently 35 IKEA retail stores in the U.S., the closest one to Southside Virginia being in Woodbridge. A Charlotte, N.C., store is expected to open in the spring of next year.

Products manufactured in Danville will supply the North American stores, significantly cutting down on transportation costs, which, with diesel prices high and the value of the dollar low, are “the most expensive part of home furnishings,” Joseph Roth, Swedwood’s director of public affairs, said Wednesday.

Excited city and Pittsylvania County officials, along with Swedwood executives, joined Kaine for the opening ceremony.

“The available work force here (that is) knowledgeable about manufacturing” is part of the reason the company was interested in the region, Roth said.

Swedwood offers “highly skilled manufacturing jobs,” he said. “We’re very thrilled to be bringing them to Danville and Pittsylvania residents.”

Currently the plant has about 175 employees, expects a total of 300 by next year, and more than 700 over the next several years. Roth said the company is considering building up to three more manufacturing plants on the 209-acre site.

City and state officials emphasized that Swedwood has broader implications for economic development in Southside and in Virginia as a whole.

Kaine praised Danville and Pittsylvania County for working together on the project and said he hoped other localities across the state would follow their lead.

In October 2006, Swedwood announced plans to build its first North American plant in the Danville area. The company said it would create 740 new jobs and invest \$281 million in the Dan River Region over the next several years.

Bengt Danielsson, president of Swedwood North America, thanked government officials Wednesday for being so hospitable, and said that he was very pleased to be in Virginia.

“We’re certain we made the right choice,” he said.

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