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EDITOR: Timothy LeBlanc PHONE: 466-6283 FAX: 466-9205 EMAIL: edmbiz@edmonton.suspub.com

Beds made in heaven

Two brothers have built a thriving business



—PRESTON BROWNSCHLAGLE, Sun photos

Above: Aaram bedding owners Feizal Chatur, front left, and brother Farhan, with staffers Khalil Muhammad and Terence Bachor behind, show off one of their products at their plant at 11616 178 St. Miao Chen, right, sews a cover on a mattress at the plant.



Jerold LeBlanc

Manufacturing and selling one's own line of bedding may seem like the ultimate cushy job, but for two Edmonton brothers it has been a lot of hard work.

Yet Feizal and Farhan Chatur are not about to rest on their laurels.

The twentysomething brothers are the main driving force behind Aaram In-

corporated, which produces its own line of Sovo mattresses and partly produces the world-renowned Hypnos line, endorsed and used by Britain's Royal Family.

Aaram opened a \$7-million, 75,000-square-foot facility, at 11616 178 St. in Edmonton, in January 2003.

"Since March we've seen between 50% and 100% increases in sales orders," says 22-year-old Farhan, the company's president, whose roles include product marketing.

Aaram's clientele is as diverse as the bedding products they sell. In addition to selling to retailers, Aaram also supplies institutional customers like universities, and non-profit groups like Catholic Social Services.

"And then you have 'commercial,' which we consider to be hotels and motels. We have contracts with companies all across Canada," explains Farhan. "We also deal with the oil companies up north. Five thousand oil workers will be sleeping on our beds - and that's just one camp."

From an original staff of six to eight people, the company has grown along with its sales. There are now more than 60 people working at the facility, which produces between 400 and 600 pieces a day - either box springs or mattresses. The com-

pany has plans to add a second shift, boosting production to 1,000 pieces a day.

As the exclusive Canadian distributor and manufacturer of the Hypnos brand of bedding, Aaram offers the ultimate experience for those customers looking for a good night's sleep.

Hypnos is one of the few Canadian products to garner a royal warrant from both the late Queen Mother and Queen Elizabeth II.

"It's the creme de la creme of products," explains Farhan. "It's not that they are endorsing it, they are actually using it, and that's what gets you the warrant."

The Hypnos line of beds is known for using exotic woods and all-natural fills, such as cashmere, silk and wool.

"You have a pocket coil base. The base is probably good enough to sleep on. It's very soft," says Feizal.

Another aspect which sets them apart is that the Hypnos beds are handmade and hand-tufted, not machine-made like they are in many other mattress companies.

Feizal says a king-sized Hypnos bed retails for \$17,000. Aaram now produces bases for Hypnos mattresses imported from Britain. But the company will soon be manufacturing the high-end mattresses completely at the Edmonton plant.

"We have all the equipment here; it actually just arrived about a month and a half ago. We are having representatives from the U.K. coming here to teach us how to make the beds, so we can ramp up for production."

Aaram will produce and sell a line of Hypnos beds, including the top model - Eminence, the Empress and two of the lower-end models, the Wendover and the Duchess.

"The Sovereign is a model, which we don't make,



is the same one the queen sleeps on," says Feizal.

The company also produces its own line of mattress - the Sovo line, a machine-made mattress and box spring, which is gaining popularity and awards throughout the industry.

The Sovo line of mattress, consisting of the Sovo, Sovo Select and Sovo Element, are all natural-filled mattresses, which are also hypo-allergenic. Costs for the Sovo brand of bedding are between \$400 and \$1,800.

In addition to its manufacturing plant and sales outlet in Edmonton, Aaram also has other outlets in Calgary, Richmond, B.C., and Mississauga, Ont.

Farhan recently returned from a three-week venture in Toronto, where the company had opened a showroom a few months ago.

"We're really doing well out there, and we figure within a year, we'll have a factory out there," he said.

"It's gone really well. It's a team effort. None of us had any experience in the mattress business, but when you have a will to succeed, you will do anything and everything to achieve that. It's been a long ride, but interesting and exciting all the way."