

A mattress fit for a king and Queen

Luxurious Hypnos bedding, a favourite of the Windsors, now offered in Canada for \$8,500

BY PATRICK BRETTHOUR, CALGARY

It is the royalty of mattresses, and the only mattress for the Royal Family's beds.

Stuffed with cashmere and silk, the Hypnos mattress has begun to pop up in display rooms across Canada, offering consumers the ultimate in nighttime luxury, not to mention the added comfort of knowing they are sleeping on the same kind of bedding as the Queen and Prince Philip.

But the royal experience comes with a king's ransom of a price tag -- \$8,500. Fortunately, that includes the box spring.

"If we know price is not an issue, we show them this," says Jacques Hebert, a "comfort adviser" at the Bedroom Shoppe in Calgary, one of only two stores in Canada selling the Cadillac of mattresses. "Actually, we call it a Bentley, because it's British," Mr. Hebert says.

Exactly how do you go about convincing someone to pay more than four times the cost of a typical mattress? Like any good salesman, Mr. Hebert says it is a matter of weaving together the physical attributes of the product with the less concrete aspects of the brand. "You need the story," he says.

That story has three chapters. The first part of the pitch has to do with the materials that go into the Hypnos mattress. It is a truly impressive-sounding list: cashmere, lamb's wool, silk, Belgian damask and even white hair, a combination of strands from cattle tails and hogs. Each material has its own custom purpose. The white hair for instance, is touted as giving the mattress its resilience, while cashmere imparts softness and warmth.

The second part of the sales pitch story centres on the time that you spend sleeping. A third of the day, Mr. Hebert says. "It's the most important piece of furniture you'll ever buy."

And the finish of the pitch ends up at Buckingham Palace. Hypnos the British firm that makes the mattresses, has a royal warrant, issued to official suppliers of the roy-



TODD KOROL/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Jacques Hebert, a 'comfort adviser' at the Bedroom Shoppe in Calgary, one of only two stores in Canada selling Hypnos mattresses, calls the top-end mattress the favourite of Britain's Royal Family, 'a Bentley.' 'If we know price is not an issue, we show [customers] this.'

al household. The warrant allows Hypnos to display the royal coat of arms on its marketing material. An-in-store display does just that, touting both the history of royal warrants and the fact that the Queen sleeps on Hypnos mattresses.

Despite their lineage, Hypnos mattresses have made their Canadian debut in decidedly non-aristocratic surroundings. The Bedroom Shoppe is no niche retailer to the rich. Located in a cluster of furniture stores in southeast Calgary, it is a mass-market retailer, with many of its mattresses priced be-

low \$1,000. The other Canadian store showcasing the Hypnos mattress is City Mattress in Toronto, also a mass-market player.

But those somewhat humble surroundings are a deliberate part of the marketing strategy of the Edmonton-based distributor of Hypnos mattresses in Canada, a plan that aims to have the product in 50 stores across the country by the end of the year. Those stores will fall into one of two categories, says Terence Bachor, vice-president of sales and marketing for Hypnos Canada, part of Araam Inc. (For now, the mattresses are imported

from Britain, although Araam wants to begin manufacturing them in Edmonton once it has completed the demanding training procedures.)

The first type of vendor is a high-end retailer of a broad range of furniture, where an \$8,500 mattress won't feel terribly out of place alongside similarly priced chaise longues. The second category, encompassing the Bedroom Shoppe and City Mattress, is that of mass-market retailers of mattresses with a strong focus on customer service, the latter being the key consideration in picking a retail outlet,

according to Mr. Bachor. "A lot of the suitability is, how do they treat their customers?"

He says there are two sorts of likely buyers for the mattress. The first are well-heeled consumers who are acting on the advice of their interior designers. The other is a person determined to get the best possible night's sleep. Mr. Bachor continues. For that type of buyer, Mr. Bachor points out that his products are not that expensive over a 12-year period. "It's cheaper to buy your Hypnos mattress than it is to pay your cable bill every day."