

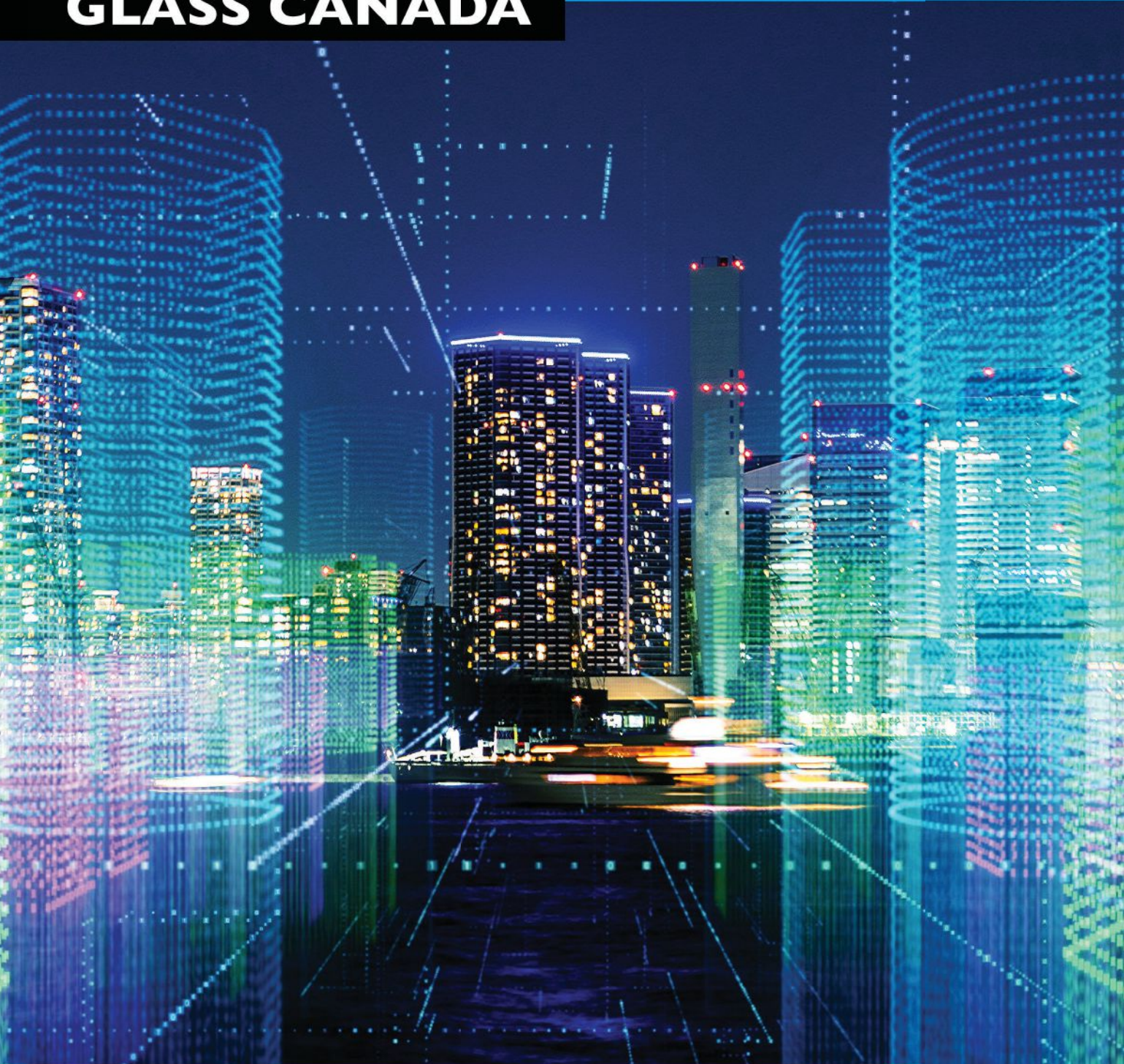


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by RICH PORAYKO

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Guns and ammo

Warning: This article may be triggering for some readers. Please read on at your own discretion.

If you are a hunter or target shooter, you are well aware that we are in the middle of the worst ammunition shortage in modern history. If you are fortunate enough to find your preferred brand, caliber and weight in stock, be prepared to pay the price. It almost takes the fun out of going to the range.

There are several different factors at play. Demand was already high pre-COVID due to a number of political issues however buying intensified once the virus reached the shores of North America. Ammo maker Hornady saw their biggest sales month ever in March 2020. Bill Boorman, owner of New Westminster, BC's Boorman Archery, also shared that March 2020 was his 50-year-old archery company's largest month ever.

It is the toilet paper effect. As with hand sanitizer, Lysol wipes and tissue, once people started panic-buying, the price for ammunition started skyrocketing. Ammunition is a consumable. In order to use a firearm, you need to consume cartridges. Otherwise it just sits there. From all accounts, most of the demand is from thrifty recreational shooters who recognized where prices were going at the beginning of all of this and bought bulk.

All of a sudden there was a large, sustained surge in demand and then the shutdowns hit. Manufacturing ammo is arguably non-essential and production facilities around the world experienced varying degrees of shutdowns. Not only are the basic components needed to manufac-

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THAT'S RICH

ture ammunition still in short supply, major suppliers are having troubles finding the basics like packing tape and boxes.

Before I moved into marketing, I studied transportation logistics at the BC Institute of Technology. It wasn't my passion but I learned a great detail about the supply chain. The term supply chain has never been so apparent than now. When a link breaks, things fall apart.

We might not be able to travel to the States anymore but it turns out that Americans are experiencing the same issue with paying people not to work that we are. So even if the big manufacturers can hire and retain labour, they are only as strong as the weakest link in their supply chain.

Ammunition is a textbook supply chain case study, however, obviously, it's not just ammo feeling pressure. Furniture, auto parts, athletic equipment and a lot more are having longer than normal lead times.

I've heard the price of a container from Asia to Vancouver has tripled over the last year or so. Online sales have overwhelmed the postal services and couriers. There still aren't enough drivers for trucking companies. It takes longer and has become harder and more expensive to source product, any product, and move it from Point A to Point B.

Perhaps panic buying might be a stretch to draw as a parallel, however the same factors are contributing to reports of extended lead times across the glass industry. By all accounts, product is available. However, the challenge is getting it from where it is to where you need it in a timely manner.

Which is a great segue to the now-paused Xinyi Canada Glass float glass facility in Stratford, Ont. It's a complicated issue. On one hand, it's a \$400 million investment injected into the region while the federal debt is over \$1 trillion and Ontario is grappling with its own colossal deficit. On the other hand, it's ton of local jobs, new technology, additional capacity and more choice for locally sourced, Canadian-produced products. Hmm, maybe it's not that complicated after all. But the project has turned hyperpolitical and faces significant hurdles. The Kens and Karens have spoken.

While the price of ammo and other products have double and tripled, evidently the latest round of glass price increases have stuck. At least that is encouraging. Hopefully it's sustainable. This is not a great time to start competing on price. •