

# MONEY



## Inspiration found in the gutters

James MacIntyre, who cleans gutters for a living, discovered a way to keep them free of debris. He's now marketing his Gutter Basket. **FACING PAGE**

**MAKE SAVE SPEND**

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**MINDING YOUR OWN BUSINESS**

## This gutter cleaner's anything but a basket case

**Name:** James MacIntyre.

**Business:** Gutter Basket Ltd., Port Coquitlam.

**Contact:** 604-612-7873,

**Number of employees:** Three.

**Time in business:** Five years.

**What is your business?** I sell and install Gutter Baskets, which I invented to keep debris from clogging people's downspouts. I also have a pressure-washing and gutter-cleaning company.

**How did you get started?** I had been cleaning gutters for about eight years and I'd get people calling me a couple of months later saying their gutters were overflowing. I'd go back and there was nothing in the gutters, but the downspout would be clogged with debris — pine needles or leaves. The other day, I went out and found half of a walnut shell blocking the spout. I was pulling my hair out, and I thought there must be something I can do. I started Mickey Mouse-ing around

and made a basket out of stucco mesh. It worked awesome, so I decided to find a company to make them for my customers.

**How do they work?** They look like little skateboard ramps made of perforated galvanized steel and they fit over the downspout with a few inches of ramp on either side of the basket. It takes about five seconds to install. If the gutters are attached properly, the debris builds up on the edges of the ramp and the water keeps flowing through. All the homeowner has to do is clean out the basket and pop it back — no more clogs.

**Where do you sell them?** I started out at the PNE in 2004, and now I do trade shows around B.C. I also install them for customers when I do the gutter cleaning and pressure washing. I have a few big residential complexes that have put them on every downspout. Gutter Baskets are also sold at 80 stores around B.C.

**What kind of response have you**



Port Coquitlam's James MacIntyre, owner of Gutter Basket Ltd., plans to expand.

**received?** At the PNE, I heard some skepticism from people about whether the baskets would stop pine needles from getting into the downspout. I already knew they'd work, but you can talk to people until you're blue in the face — they have to see it. So there was

one guy from North Vancouver who was sure the needles would get through, so I just gave him one to try. For the next five weeks, we had really heavy rain. He called and said he hadn't had any problems and he was going to buy Gutter Baskets for the other downspouts on his house.

**Is the business successful?** It's getting there. I was told it would take 10 years to get my investment back, but I did it in three. My goal is to sell 20,000 this year. I would like it to become my entire source of income one day; as you get older, it gets harder to climb up ladders and crawl around on roofs.

**Future plans?** I want to try to get past B.C. and get Gutter Baskets into stores across Canada.

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