

TIMOTHY'S WORLD COFFEE

## A LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

By Alice Wan, MES and Rami Hanna, MES, York University

Timothy's World Coffee was founded as a supplier of high quality specialty coffee in 1975 by Timothy Snelgrove, a Western Business School MBA. Becky McKinnon, owner and president for the last 25 years, has continued the tradition of buying and selling only specialty coffee but has also taken Timothy's in the direction of sustainability of production, processing, roasting and marketing of select coffees from around the world.

With the over-supply and record low prices for coffee since the late 1990s, McKinnon began taking steps to ensure a sustainable supply of specialty coffee. She began to enter into long term contracts with local growers to guarantee supply at attractive prices to farmers. McKinnon also invested in the local producing communities and their schools. This was the beginning of what is now commonly called "relationship" coffee in the industry. Timothy's La Vereda Coffee from Colombia has been its showcase coffee for sustainability.

More recently Timothy's and York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies entered into a partnership to promote the sale of Las Nubes Coffee throughout its more than 160 retail outlets. This is a specialty coffee grown in areas adjacent to a York research project focusing on biodiversity protection and rural sustainability. Las Nubes Coffee is certified "sustainable" by the Ministry of Agriculture of Costa Rica based on detailed ecological, economic and social/ethical criteria. Timothy's began purchasing this coffee from the farmers' cooperative, CoopeAgri, at a price higher than the fair trade price. Its most recent purchases have been significantly above the fair trade base price. The economic benefits are shared among the producing farmers and a community fund has been established by CoopeAgri to support local social investments. Production and processing are ecologically sound. Timothy's donates a significant portion of its sales to York's Fisher Fund for Neotropical Conservation, created in honor of Dr. M.M. Fisher, the benefactor of the Las Nubes Rainforest to the university. The Timothy's/York partnership has recently won a major international award for leadership in fund raising for higher education and the Sustainability 2005 Award from the Specialty Coffee Association of America.

Timothy's markets an increasing array of specialty coffees that carry various certifications, including Fair Trade, organic, and Rainforest Alliance. This is the sustainability trajectory that Becky McKinnon will carry forward.

[www.timothys.ca](http://www.timothys.ca)