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CONSTRUCTION TODAY

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Working Close to Home Base

Waldrop Construction self-performs many tasks on its projects in rural west and central Texas.

Waldrop Construction, page 200

Downtown Developer

WestStone creates a new urban neighborhood for a growing Canadian city.

WestStone Properties Ltd., page 20



What's the Holdup?

Why so few developers take advantage of green incentives today.

page 10

MITCHELL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Mitchell Project Management offers a variety of construction and project management services.



Growing Bigger and Better

British Columbia-based Mitchell Project Management has established a steady stream of work at the Vancouver International Airport and hopes to carry that success to other Canadian hubs.

BY JOANNA MILLER

Like many entrepreneurs, Stephane Mitchell worked for several large companies before deciding he could find a better way to do business on his own. He established Mitchell Project Management in 1996, in an effort to get more hands-on experience and improve himself, he notes. "I found it very hard to get to that next level in management working for these large national companies," he says. "A lot of times in larger construction firms, people get promoted because of who they know rather than what they know – it's the old boys' club."

Instead, Mitchell bought a truck and began taking on cast-in-place and pre-cast concrete stair form work on spec, which led to bigger opportunities.

The Richmond, British Columbia-based company soon began taking on renovation projects for A&B Sound, a large electronics/CD retail outlet store chain in western Canada. Other retail and restaurant projects followed, and "I never looked back,"

Mitchell says. "We grew our team a little bit bigger and better and worked for a lot of national brands right from inception." His brother, Boreal Mitchell, is the company's vice president and co-owner.

Boreal Mitchell, who studied biological sciences prior to coming on board with his brother, works as the head estimator, as well as the project manager on airport projects. "I enjoy the atmosphere and the professionalism at [Vancouver International Airport]," he adds.

"Working out here you really get to work and meet with a lot of talented individuals in all aspects of the construction industry, from other project managers to engineers and architects."

The company's national accounts in Canada include The Spectra Group of Restaurants Inc., which owns brands such as Bread Garden, Romano's Macaroni Grill and The Boat-house. It also works with CARA, which owns Milestones Bar & Grill, Swiss Chalet, Montana's & Kelsey's. Mitchell Project Management began its work in airports through CARA's former air terminal restaurants division, which it owned until recently.

Mitchell Project Management
www.mpmcanada.com

Headquarters: Richmond,
British Columbia

Employees: 12

Services: Construction and
project management

Stephane Mitchell, president:
"We found a niche working in
the airports, specifically the Van-
couver International Airport."

Airport Niche

"We found a niche working in the airports, specifically the Vancouver International Airport," Mitchell says. "We found that by working out here, because of the procedures and paperwork and the way they work out there, it's had a big impact on our company. It's improving the manner in which we work overall – we do a lot more preplanning and organization." Boreal Mitchell adds, "There's not as many knee-jerk reactions than before."

The company maintains and operates approximately 3,000 square feet of office space in the domestic and international terminals at the Vancouver International Airport. Tenants have included Virgin Books & Records, Starbucks, Tim Horton's and Pizza Hut. It also takes on projects for clients such as Vancouver International Airport Authority, HMS Host, HDS Retail and Mexicana Airlines.

Airport work has been plentiful due in part to the frequent expansion and re-branding efforts, Stephane Mitchell says. "For retail stores, part of their lease is the required RFP process and capital reinvestment after seven years. So, brands

are constantly changing," he explains. "Tenants might not always be in a position to stay because they have to go through the RFP again when the lease comes due.

"Plus, the major brands are continually evolving and changing their design."

The company recently completed work on a new British Airways lounge. The \$1 million (Canadian) project features high-end finishes and an "amazing view," Mitchell says. "There is a beautiful view of the local ski mountains from the lounge, and it also overlooks one of the main landing strips."

And although the company's airport work is primarily concentrated in Vancouver, some of its staff members retain Canada Pass security clearance, which allows them work in any Canadian airport.

"We maintain those passes because, a lot of times, clients ask us to go to Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto or Montreal to do projects for them."

He says the company's long-term goal is to establish offices in all major Canadian airports.

Making it Work

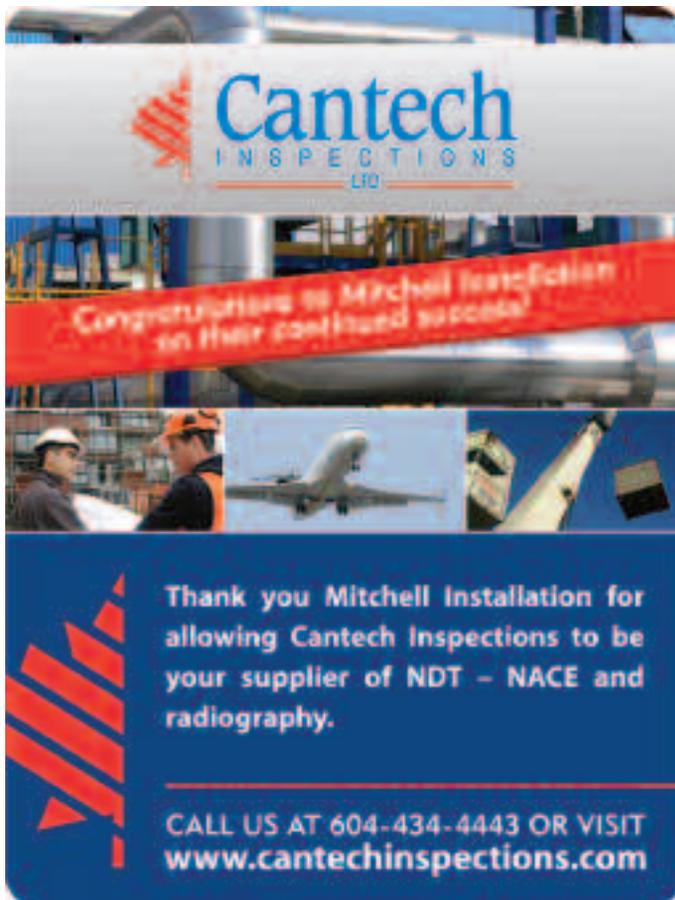
Mitchell Project Management has worked as far north as Fort McMurray, Alberta. This fast-growing area has presented numerous project opportunities, as well as some challenges. The weather can be difficult, particularly in the winter, when temperatures fall to minus 50 C. Retaining qualified manpower is also a struggle. "Every time we bring workers into this area, they get scooped up by multibillion-dollar corporations," Mitchell says.

As Stephane was an ex-union carpenter, he felt it would be advantageous for the company to solicit the local carpenters union for qualified manpower to complete the \$3 million Boston Pizza project in Fort McMurray.

"All the qualified people we brought in to town were solicited to work on other large tar sands projects as these companies have unlimited finances to throw around," he adds.

"But we managed to get it done and meet the schedule on time and on budget, in an area where we were told it would be impossible to accomplish this."

The project was completed in 2006. ■

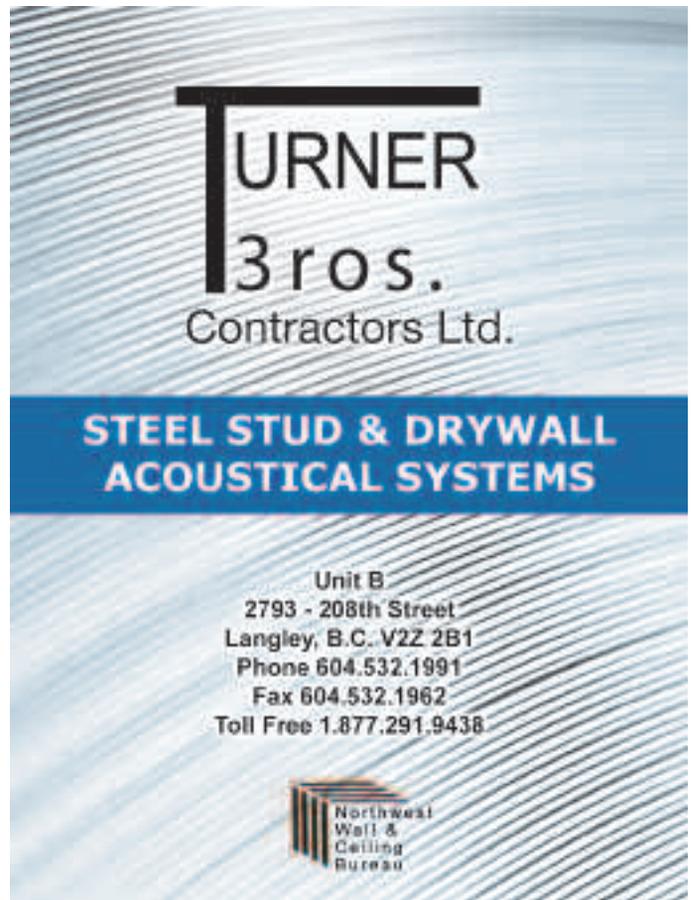


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