

Being A Leader

TRIBUILD IS ADAPTING TO MARKET TRENDS BY BEING ECONOMICAL AND BUILDING GREEN. BY LIBBY JOHN

Tribuild Contracting Ltd. – initially an interior office construction and renovation company when it was founded in 1982 – specializes in a range of projects for the education, retail, warehouse and commercial markets. For example, it is expected to complete two new elementary schools in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, by this spring, President Fred Baxter says.

Taradale Elementary School is an \$11 million project and encompasses 45,000 square feet, and Panarama Hills is a \$9 million project and is about 38,000 square feet. Both schools have a library, gymnasium, offices and a multipurpose area. Taradale has 16 classrooms and 10 modular prefab classrooms, and Panarama has 14 classroom and four modular prefab classrooms.

It is also working on a 700,000-square-foot, 40-floor office complex renovation in Calgary, which is expected to be completed in 2012. The \$70 million four-year project involves systematically demolishing and rebuilding new office space one floor at a time because the building is occupied during construction, he explains.

Although it is not striving for any certifications, Baxter says, “We are trying to keep all the construction as green as possible by doing things [such as] recycling carpet and ceiling tile,” he says. “It’s not actually a LEED project, as far as certification, but [the client] wants to do as much LEED work as they can.”

Like most of its work, these projects are for repeat clients, he says. “We have a fairly well-established set of regular clients,” he says. “A majority of the projects are for regular [clients] and new ones come from referrals.”

Baxter attributes the high repeat client rate to the company’s work philosophy. “We basically like to do a good job for them and we also try to work on a personal relationship-type level,” he explains. “We work shoulder-to-shoulder to get the project done. We like to be as involved with the owner as possible in getting the work done.”

Data Center Projects

In the past 10 years, Tribuild has become a leader in data center renovation and construction projects that involve upgrading critical and back-up power and A/C systems. “Tribuild has



» Tribuild incorporates green building techniques such as recycling carpet and tiles.

Tribuild Contracting Ltd.

www.tribuild.com

- **Location:** Calgary, Alberta, Canada
- **Employees:** 40
- **Services:** General contracting and construction management

“We like to be as involved with the owner as possible in getting the work done.” —Fred Baxter, president

successfully completed multimillion-dollar upgrades for several communications companies, major oil companies and building owners and managers,” Baxter says. “We work with our clients and their consultants to achieve on-budget and on-time results with no downtime.”

The company recently completed electrical and mechanical work for a major data center in Calgary that runs 24/7, he says. The \$6 million project had about 10,000 square feet of computer space and was occupied during construction.

Tribuild had to coordinate the electrical, mechanical and architectural renovations with both the tenant’s personnel and the landlord since the work involved both tenant and base building systems, he says.

The project was completed in four months, he adds. “They had a very tight schedule,” he says. “We couldn’t have downtime. We had to keep the operation running continuously.”

Adapting to Trends

Current conditions have forced Tribuild to be more economical. “Now with the current economic climate, it is even more critical to review and analyze all aspects of the projects with

regard to capital costs and operating costs," Baxter says. "Clients want to know exactly what the future savings will be by spending more upfront."

This is more vital because the company expects its backlog to decrease. "Right at the moment, we're still busy with ongoing projects, but this spring and summer, we'll be looking for more work," he says. "We'll be more aggressively going after new markets. We will be reviewing our services with our clients and consultants and pursuing all suggested opportunities."

The company is also focused on sustainability. For example, the company strives to recycle and reuse material from its construction sites. "It has become more and more feasible with all the recycling facilities that are available," he says. "So there is more recycling done and more we can do. It's become quite a bit more prominent."

A Family Atmosphere

Baxter and his partners – John Leskow and Hans Kreuz – decided to start the company after their employer closed down. Baxter and



Leskow still serve as senior partners and Kreuz retired in 2006.

The company has 40 employees. "We want to try to operate more like a family owned business even though we're not actually family," Baxter says. "Our employees are mostly long-term so we think of them as family."

The firm strives to be fair with its people. "If they have personal issues, we try to work through it with them," he explains.

"Mostly we try to deal clients and personnel [with integrity] and treat them all well," he says. "That's why we have long-term clients and personnel. We want both groups to be satisfied."

This work philosophy will enable the company to continue to be successful. "I would like to see the company maintain steady growth over the future," Baxter adds. "I would like to increase our full-time client base and maintain and expand our market share. Mostly, I'd like to work with my enthusiastic and energetic young staff to further develop and expand our overall capabilities and expertise." ♦

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