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How Defence Construction Canada ingenuity and perseverance paid off

When the Canadian Forces Support Unit Office (CFSU(O)) approached Defence Construction Canada late summer 2008 about constructing a new, temporary drill hall in Ottawa, the initial assessment of the work that would be required was simple - three days of work for a deputy Program Director (PD).

The task was to erect a temporary structure, move the weapons (Howitzer guns used at ceremonies such as Remembrance Day) into the new building, et voila. Some 13 months later, CFSU(O) finally got its sturdy new shelter, but not before DCC was called on to showcase what can happen when a team understands the project delivery process and pulls together to leverage the ingenuity, perseverance and collective experience of its people to meet client expectations.

"The project kind of snowballed," recalls DCC civil engineer Jasna Czaharynski of the Project and Program Management team, as the effort, cost and time required to erect the temporary shelter was initially underestimated. Jasna was originally assigned as the deputy PD but later assumed the role of deputy Project Manager (PM) and then the unofficial site inspector to ensure the client requirement was delivered.

"It was an excellent learning experience. I worked with some 45 people to keep this project moving forward. There were a lot of challenges, but in the end it was absolutely terrific."

The original shelter specifications called for building a fairly rudimentary structure, one that could indeed be erected over several days. However, the project was very important as the building would be used for many years in both housing/maintaining the guns and in providing a space for troops to practice their drills. DCC understood the client's urgency to ensure continuity of training. After DCC deputy PD and Department of National Defence (DND) engineers assessed the initial requirement, it became apparent that a lot more project work needed to be done – that the project scope was much bigger – including site preparation, paving, grading, drainage, water service, heating, lighting and a sprinkler system. It was also decided that the project would require contracting, consulting and inspection.

What made the project more complex became a success story for DCC employees in the way they went beyond their normal scope of involvement to implement the project from start to finish. Whereas DCC normally conducts initial analyses to determine best options and prepare submissions to obtain project funding, for this project DCC was engaged much later in the process. DCC employees were able to proceed by drawing on their broader knowledge and experience in the area of engineering design and of the approval process within DND to become, in effect, a one-stop-shop of services.

"While the site location was a parking lot, you can't put a structure on it without proper site preparation," says Ms. Czaharynski. "We had to prepare the site. An engineering design was needed for the drainage and grading to ensure surface water drains away and around the structure, not through it."

Since the Sprung shelter had been procured by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), the site adaptation and interior structure requirements had not been included. DCC needed to ensure a complete project was implemented.

“We had to contract a consultant for the site grading and drainage design and then for the water service, electrical, mechanical and structural components. Following the design components, competitions were held for the paving work. We had to finish paving before snowfall and while the asphalt plants were still open.”

This was definitely not a three-day project and the client was concerned with the increased complexity and implementation timelines. DCC assumed deputy PM responsibilities by reviewing the engineering designs and kept the project moving with a supportive DND client and with the cooperation of PWGSC staff.

In September 2009, the 700-square-metre, pre-fabricated Sprung shelter was officially commissioned with limited occupancy having started in the summer.

“It was the right thing to do,” says Ms. Czaharynski. “Even though the project tested all of my skills, from people skills to engineering and project management, we got the job done right and the sense of trust built among all of the team members – between DND, DCC and PWGSC, it was a very positive experience. I felt really good about DCC’s persistence in ensuring the job was done right from project development, to contracting to construction.”

The PPM team has written a Lessons Learned document so that others within DCC can benefit from its experience. Among the lessons learned: Keep client-focused, ensure you and your client understand the project complexity and requirements, know your product, know the approvals process, include the Canadian Forces Fire Marshal’s office, be specific with your contractors, expect and plan for bad weather, keep track of the budget and assume if there is rock you will not miss it.

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No longer does Phil Grandy have to check on the quality of contractors' work to clean up DND legacy sites from the parking lot.

With his recently minted UXO Level 1 technician certification, Grandy, who is Quality Manager with the DND UXO and Legacy Sites Program at DCC, can now safely observe others tending to unexploded explosive ordnance (UXO) as they do the work.

Grandy successfully completed the first UXO 1 training course offered in Canada just before Christmas. The five-week course at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton involved intense classroom work, as well as outdoor sessions at nearby CFB Gagetown learning how to find, identify and cordon off unexploded UXO.

On actual projects, contractors do the work with metal detectors and other equipment to find and safely remove and detonate devices, Grandy, in his audit role, checks whether the workers are following policy and procedures, and taking other steps to ensure they are providing quality service to DND.

"There is obviously a very high degree of personal risk whenever you are working around these devices," says Grandy. "This training allows me to work safely alongside contractors and to understand their methods and monitor their results."

Grandy is scheduled to conduct audits at four legacy sites across Canada in the coming months.

"Having a briefing with the contractors in real time on performance is an excellent way to ensure they are accountable for the quality of their work," says Grandy. These audits also promote the continuous improvement of the legacy sites program and allow DCC to gather lessons learned. "You can't move forward," he concludes, "without knowing how you are doing."



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8 Wing Trenton construction boom will increase military operational effectiveness

Driving along the highway that divides the north and south sides of 8 Wing Trenton, there are obvious signs that the largest air base in Canada is expanding, almost bursting at the seams with new buildings and infrastructure.

From the enormous crane that looms over the horizon to the temporary shelters and ATCO trailers that dot the horizon, this is a base on the receiving end of one of the largest infusions of infrastructure funding in decades. Sod turnings seem to be a regular event here, one that inspires and motivates both civilian and military members that great things are underway.

"By far these programs and projects are not wants they are needs," says electrical engineer Peter Irwin, Defence Construction Canada team leader of Program and Project Management at 8 Wing Trenton. His team of seven, a mixture of engineers, technicians, security advisor and clerical assistant are at the forefront of a \$334 million construction boom as announced by the Minister of National Defence, Peter MacKay, last September.

The projects include a new Air Mobility Training Centre, Material Distribution Centre, Training Accommodations building, Maintenance Hangar for the CC-177 Globemaster III (C-17), Electrical and Mechanical Engineering and Transportation garage, a new aircraft refurbishing facility for the Aerospace and Telecommunications Engineering Support Squadron Refinishing Facility and a new hangar for the soon-to-arrive J-model C-130 Hercules.



"This is an incredibly challenging and exciting time to be involved with DCC especially in Trenton," says Coleen Purdey-Morrison, construction program manager. Ms. Purdey-Morrison says although she is thrilled to be managing some of the larger projects valued at \$105 million, the sheer volume and pace of the projects have made building a qualified team a bit of a challenge.

"The biggest challenge has been finding people for all the new positions we have had during this past year and working on training for a staff that have minimal DCC experience."

Yet, the expertise of employees such as Ms. Purdey-Morrison, Mr. Irwin and others, such as civil technician David Case, seems to be winning over any logistical challenges that may

come up. According to Mr. Case, it's exciting to be working on such "ground-breaking" projects such as the new maintenance hangar for the colossal C-17 strategic airlifter.

"It's almost the size of four Canadian football fields including end zones," says Mr. Case enthusiastically. "We have poured more than 2,000 cubic metres of concrete just for the footings so far. I think the Air Force is touting it as the largest project they have ever done. It's like building the world's biggest garage."

Indeed, and according to Mr. Irwin, the C-17 hangar, and all the other infrastructure projects at 8 Wing Trenton, are being built with a sense of pride knowing that eventually they will help members of the Canadian Forces do their jobs more effectively, here at home and abroad.

"What we're doing here is being driven by world events and it's a part of all the good things that the CF are doing around the world. We are extremely proud to have a hand in that, creating the necessary support systems for that work around the world."

Mr. Irwin says another source of pride is knowing that DCC is adhering to the Department of National Defence directives that all new structures at 8 Wing Trenton be built according to the latest environmental standards for sustainability and energy efficiency.

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You can perhaps forgive Stephanie Ryan, DCC's Manager of Communications, for smiling when asked to reflect on the different perceptions that she's encountered over the years on what the work of the communications group is.

"We can't fix your phone," Ryan says, "but we can help you communicate your message to the right audience. Making change, informing and educating, building client relationships, those are the results that we want to achieve with our work. There is fun stuff too, like making videos or planning special events. But even the fun stuff has a rationale."



Ryan has been in her position at DCC for nearly eight years, following jobs at a national magazine publisher and a biotech firm. In her view, Ryan links the role of communications directly to the support that DCC provides to its clients at DND everyday.

A case in point: DCC's contracting services group wanted to counteract a commonly held view that its processes and requirements are barriers to getting the real work of architecture, engineering and construction done—particularly since this perception exacerbates the group's already high-pressure work environment and is a factor in employee retention.

Ryan designed and ran messaging sessions with regional service line leaders to address the problem. "We honed in on an image, both internal and external, and asked 'What do you want these audiences to know about us?'"

The outcome of the sessions was a list of key messages about contracting services, which the group can now present to internal and external colleagues and clients, case studies for training purposes, including role playing, and talking points to help junior staff in particular communicate the role and value of the work contracting services does for DND.

"This initiative worked because we developed substantial end products that people can use." More to the point, Ryan says, "the director and the senior service line leaders involved were really engaged in the process, they know their business very well and take the communications challenge seriously."

DCC Communications is a partner with DND in media relations, working together with the public affairs group of ADMIE to get a consistent message out about the building and other projects under way across the country.

DCC's award-winning Intranet site is also a product of Ryan's group. The multifaceted site

includes tools to help DCC employees provide the best service to DND, including an extensive collection of health and safety information, and an online accident/incident report.

But, is there a place for the fun stuff, like special events or promotional items? Yes, says Ryan, but it's anything but lightweight. An event like the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign has a large internal communications component behind it. Also, activities surrounding employee engagement and the corporate brand are very important to the business, and for recruiting and retaining the skilled staff DCC needs to continue to serve DND.

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DCC at Work is our Corporate Services newsletter, delivered bi-monthly to our public- and private-sector partners and the public at large. The articles in *DCC at Work* focus on service-delivery success stories, from the most complex projects to innovative ideas that save time and money.

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