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VanMar Constructors Ontario

Article by Alan Dorich Published on 14 August 2011



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When **VanMar Constructors Ontario Inc.** does quality work, the result is not only a satisfied and repeat customer, but also a better work environment for its employees. "[A satisfied client] translates into repeat work with a loyal customers and a better work environment for all members of the team," Project Director of Ontario Mike Van Hemert says. "That makes [operations here] much more positive."



Based in Cambridge, Ontario, and Langley, British Columbia, the company provides general contracting services for multiresidential and single-family projects. "We're really focused on the multi-residential side of new construction," Van Hemert says.

"However, we have the capacity to build ICI-type projects, making our firm well rounded to deal with different market fluctuations that affect the construction industry," he asserts. "We strive to create customer loyalty with every project we complete."

VanMar Constructors Ontario is a sister company of VanMar Constructors Inc., a general contractor based in Langley, British Columbia. Its history goes back to 1973, when brothers Eric and Bernie Van Maren founded the company.

In 2009, VanMar launched its sister company in Ontario, and now it collectively enjoys sales of \$80 million. To stay successful, "[We] ensure that our sites are being managed effectively and keep our quality levels up and [make sure] and our schedules are being met," Van Hemert says.

KEEPING BUSY

VanMar Constructors Ontario's current projects include an 80-unit senior residential building in Milton, Ontario, for the Halton Community Housing Corp. Van Hemert notes that the contractor is ahead of schedule on the \$11 million project.

"We should be done by September," he predicts. VanMar Constructors Ontario has managed this feat by pushing its team to be more efficient. For example, when the company started construction last September, "We tried to motivate all of our trades to get the roof on before Christmas," he says.

"We also ended up prefabbing the trusses on the ground, which enabled us to have a much faster completion process on the roof," he continues. "That probably saved us a couple weeks of critical-path time."

The company also is in preconstruction on a 60-unit affordable ownership project in Guelph, Ontario, for non-profit Creating Homes. The project, which will feature an underground parkade and will stand six stories above grade, carries a budget of nearly \$8 million. VanMar Constructors Ontario also is in preconstruction on a nine-story, 90-unit affordable ownership project in Cambridge, Ontario, for Option For Homes. "We hope to start construction [on that] in early 2012," he says, adding that the project has a budget of approximately \$15 million and will be a precast building.

The company is also involved with other projects, including work on some affordable/social housing projects, long-term care and market housing projects which are all at different stages of construction and development.

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Much of VanMar's work is done on design-assist or design/build basis with its clients. By getting involved early in the development stages of a project, VanMar ensures the client that the design is getting developed on time and in accordance with the overall project budget that is established at the schematic design stage.

Being involved early also allows VanMar to keep control on cost escalation and ensure an efficient design during the design-development phase of a project. A building can be designed efficiently and cost effectively, while still maintaining a quality building, and result in overall cost savings to the owner. By doing three to five budgets for its clients throughout the design phase, VanMar keeps the owner involved with up-to-date cost budgets so there are no cost surprises for the client once the design is completed.

TOP PERFORMERS

Van Hemert has been with VanMar Constructors since 2003. "It's a great company to be a part of," he says, noting that the parent company maintains strong commitments to ethics, quality and customer satisfaction. "Principals make for a positive work environment with all members of the project team."

He credits the company's success to the leadership of owner Art Van Maren, who has a long career in construction and guides the firm with his integrity. Because of this focus, "Our relationships with our customers is second to none," Van Hemert states.

Van Hemert also praises the company's subtrades, which it hires carefully. "We look at their past performance in relation to other similar types of projects," he says. "We make sure they have the adequate manpower and experience on similar, relevant completed projects."

In addition, VanMar Constructors will do a financial background check on each subtrade. "[That] will basically allow us to ensure they are capable of delivering quality workmanship," he says. "They'll stay through the job and finish the work at the quality levels we expect our trades to work to."

VanMar Constructors' key partners include Davmar Mechanical Ltd., Aberfoyle Concrete Ltd. and Stubbe's Precast Commercial Inc.

WELL SITUATED

VanMar Constructors is coping with increased competition due to the global economic crisis, Van Hemert says. "VanMar focuses on projects that their expertise on design and construction will bode well for them and the clients," he says.

Additionally, the industry has shifted more towards green building. "LEED building is becoming the norm," he says.

"We feel we have a great resume for energy efficiency and LEED-type projects that will fuel the next wave of construction," he says.

"I see decent growth opportunities in Ontario," he says, adding that customers are looking to build much higher structures. "With our expertise in multi-residential construction, we feel we're situated to help prospective clients create the higher densities that the cities are going to be asking for in the future."

Focus

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It's no secret that customers in all businesses want things to be as simple as possible. Wadih Fares has put that strategy into practice as he has grown **W.M. Fares Group** into single-source development of real estate throughout Nova Scotia. "Today, we have a one-stop shop for everything to do with design and the construction industry," Fares says. "You come into our doors with an idea in hand, and we can do all of the services until I give you the key to your vision."

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