

WATERING DOWN THE PROBLEM

SPOTLIGHT

Excel Dewatering handles water problems with specialized expertise

Excel Dewatering in Kelowna works in a highly specialized field. Since 1989 the company has accepted a variety of tough challenges and consistently overcome them with expertise and professionalism. Owner and president Ernie Fahrion said that the company's longevity and success is largely due to hard work, diligence and a dedication to service.

Simply put, Excel Dewatering makes it feasible for municipalities and contractors to lay down infrastructure and build in areas with a high water table. With its sophisticated pumping equipment, it lowers the existing water table so that work can take place in a dry environment. Among the jobs the company takes on are:

- Bypass Pumping
- Large Volume Draining
- Pump Stations
- Utilities Installations
- Major Water and Sewer Infrastructure
- Water Treatment Plants
- Structural Fill Placement
- Soil Clean Up
- Diversions
- Auger and Bore Pit Dewatering

A good deal of the work the company does is for municipalities. The ground water is pumped out of the work area so that excavation to install or repair existing infrastructure can take place in dry conditions. Fahrion pointed out that the company works with the environment, ensuring that no harm is done. The water is pumped to existing storm sewer pipes or into a lake, river, streams and ponds.

"Our water is clean groundwater," Fahrion said. "The beauty of the Wellpoint System is that it is one of the only approved systems that is environmentally safe. We source our equipment from all over

"There are so many different installations and so many applications, but the principle is always the same. We remove that water."

ERNIE FAHRION
OWNER AND PRESIDENT, EXCEL DEWATERING

and build and assemble a lot of it ourselves; the rest we buy from manufacturers."

In 25 years, Excel Dewatering has grown from a relatively small operation to one that works throughout BC and Alberta and has even taken on projects in Saskatchewan. Fahrion bought the assets of the business from a colleague in 1989. At the time, he owned a plumbing company and had years of experience with pumps.

"I grew up around pumps," he said. "Pumps are second nature to me. When I was first introduced to this business, it really intrigued me, because it fascinated me that all this water could just miraculously disappear. There are so many different installations and so many applications, but the principle is always the same. We remove that water." Like any business that has survived and thrived for 25 years, Fahrion said there have been bumps along the road, but looking back he has no regrets about his decision to buy the business.

Over the years Excel Dewatering has worked on infrastructure for cities, regional districts and municipalities. It has worked on many sewer and water treatment plants. Those structures are generally in low lying areas with high water tables because water and sewage flows downhill. Excel has also done many building foundations, some of which have to go very deep. Once the work is done, the water naturally flows back to the areas it occupied previously.



In 25 years, Ernie Fahrion has grown his company to cover all of BC and Alberta



Excel makes sure that the Kelowna Lakeshore infrastructure project runs smooth and dry



Excel does river diversions and dewatering for new fresh water intake structures

The Kelowna General Hospital expansion is a recent large project where Excel had to pump water away from the building site for the foundation. Excel also has considerable expertise with earth dam remediation.

"If the dam is showing signs of leakage, we've pumped and drained the reservoir," Fahrion said. "Then they can carry on construction. We've dewatered the applicable area where it's been leaking and then they repair that with more impermeable earth material." Excel diverts the stream around the reservoir with pumps running around the clock. When the work is done, the stream flows back into the reservoir. Typically, pumps work 24/7, sometimes for short periods of time and sometimes for months on end.



A perimeter dewatering system for the construction of a new waste water treatment plant in one of Excel's areas of expertise

A current major project is Kelowna's Lakeshore Drive upgrade, a four-month job for Excel that is seeing the installation of a new trunk sewer as well as a new bridge across Mission Creek. Depending on how critical the job is, an employee will man the pumps.

"We usually have men on site during the day," Fahrion said. "Our equipment requires moving and re-setup a lot. As the pipeline progresses, we have to leapfrog our equipment ahead of the excavation, because we have to dewater prior to digging."

Excel works with a core group of experts on staff, varying the manpower as jobs demand. Excel also makes continual investment in new equipment and in keeping existing equipment in top shape. Over the years, the company's growth has been most evident in the size of projects it takes on. Today it can handle any challenge that comes its way.

"The longer we've been around, the more people know of us," Fahrion said. "Because of our knowledge and our experience, we're able to take on the bigger jobs. We pride ourselves in strong customer relations." He noted that many customers have been with the company for years, coming back again and again with new projects. He said that certainly in the long term, the company will keep doing what it does so well. In

fact, he can't imagine doing anything else until perhaps if some day in the future someone wanted to take it over.

"There's something about this business that keeps you going and keeps you interested. There's no such thing as 'same old, same old' in our world. Every project is different. Although the end result is the same and the goal we want to achieve is always the same, each application is different. It's always a new job site and new people. The challenges don't ever go away. A major motivation for us is that every day is a new day."

He added that another factor in the company's success is the people it has surrounded itself with: staff, customers and suppliers have all made enormous contributions. He especially credits long time employee, now jobsite superintendent, Greg Nicholson who has been with the company almost from the beginning.

"From our repair companies to our accountant and bankers, we've been fortunate to surround ourselves with good people," he said. "They've been supportive people and we've just always done well with that support. I'd like to personally thank all past, present and future customers and contractors for their support."

Excel Dewatering is at #201 - 540 Groves Ave. in Kelowna
www.exceldewatering.com

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