

Local firm revolutionizes bridge building



Crawford Dewar

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

Build a better – and cheaper – bridge and they will line up to buy it.

“They” being cash-strapped municipalities with long lists of aging bridges that need to be replaced, who are now turning to a new Acton company – Saltech – to design, build and install a new type of composite bridge.

Saltech – four partners from the Acton area and a stable of engineers – opened just six months ago in two buildings on Commerce Crescent, after three years of research and development.

The firm, with the help of Russian engineers, took a fibreglass technology used to build bridge decks in the United States, and expanded it to actually make the bridges from fibreglass, metal and wood – pre-designed bridges that are cheaper by up to 30 per cent over conventional concrete structures, lighter and much faster to install.

“Our bridges exceed the Ontario bridge code that is recognized all over the world,” Dewar said, adding Saltech has submitted documents with the Federal government to change the bridge building code to



Problem

“raise the standard of how bridges will be built.”

Two pilot projects done recently by the company, including replacement of a bridge in Guelph/Eramosa, quickly proved Saltech’s cost and timesaving claims over the use of conventional concrete to rebuild or replace a bridge.

Crawford Dewar, one of Saltech’s partners, said their state-of-the-art bridges are made of fibreglass, metal and wood and cost approximately \$2,000 per-square-metre, compared with \$3,500-per-square metre for a concrete bridge.

“Canada is 15 years behind the United States (in bridge replacement technology), so as Canadians, we developed

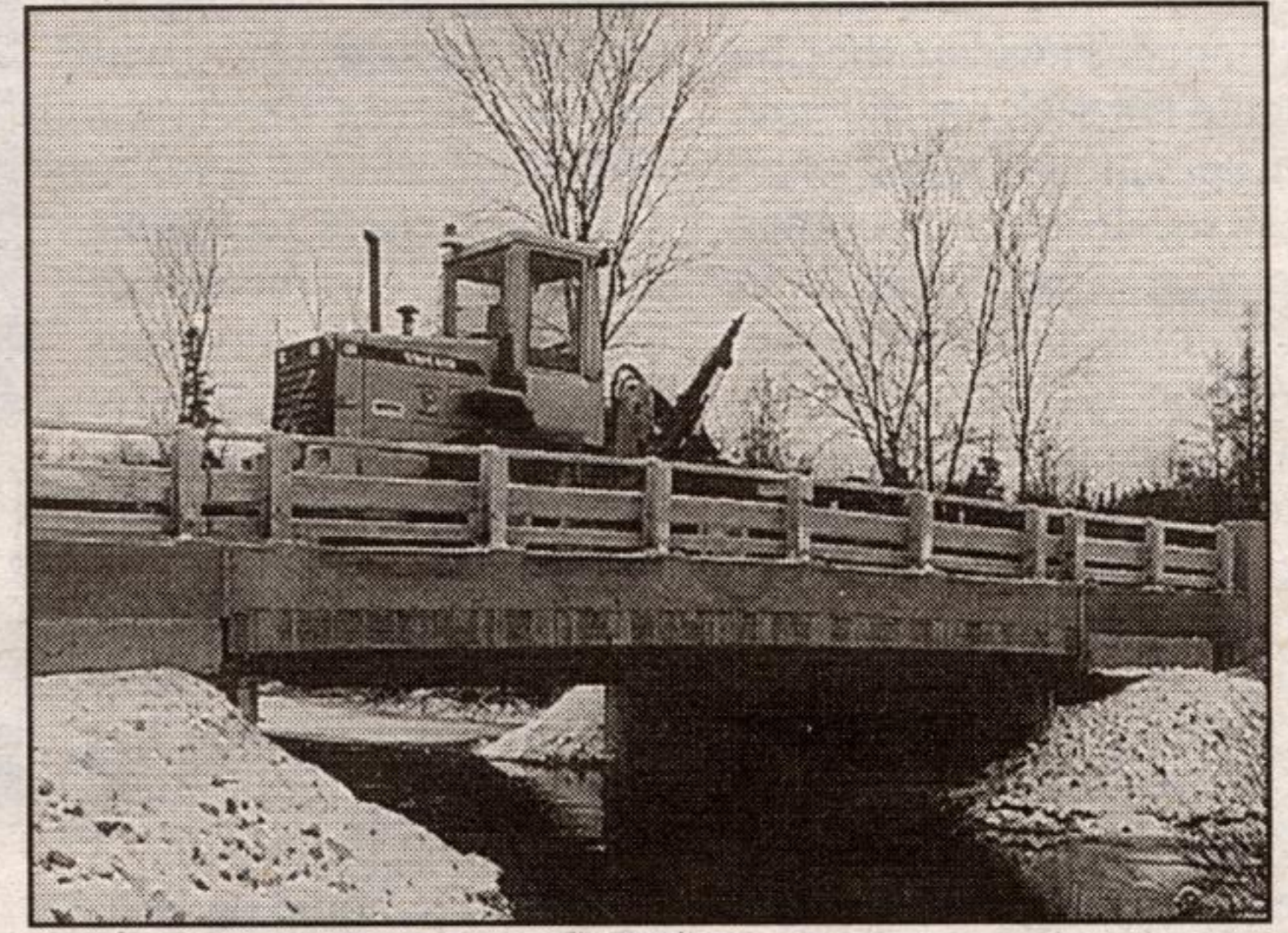
this technology with engineers at universities all over the U.S.,” Dewar said on Friday, adding they did two pilot projects to show that the technology works.

Dewar said Saltech saved Guelph/Eramosa Township \$100,000 on a recent project to replace a bowstring bridge, built in 1921, on the Sixth Line of Eramosa, just north of Highway 24. Saltech also saved Bolton \$288,000 on a bridge replacement project.

“Those projects basically confirmed that our company is capable of doing what it promised, and based on that, our company has already received two projects from one customer and a project from another,” Dewar said.

Dewar points to reports showing that Canada has a \$2-trillion infrastructure in bridges, with a \$49-billion backlog of bridges that are 50 years and older and need replacing.

He said using a fibreglass composite bridge “stops the vicious cycle” of constantly replacing bridges with concrete, which only carry a one-year warranty on design and installation, whereas



Solution

Saltech gives a 25-year warranty.

“We love fibreglass because it is immune to salt and water, Dewar said, adding to replace a bridge with concrete could disrupt traffic for up to three months, where with Saltech’s technology the bridge parts are designed and manufactured in Acton and taken on site, where it takes an hour-and-a-half to install.

Dewar said if he’d gone to municipalities five years ago

with this technology, it never would have been accepted, but with dwindling dollars from the province, municipalities – now bridge owners – are taking the state of their bridges “very seriously.”

“So, the downside to downloading for municipalities was like a nemesis, but for us it is a market,” Dewar said.

Along with the four partners, Saltech employs seven at the two Acton plants and has 12 engineers on staff in Scarborough.

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BRANCH N 197 **LEGION NEWS**
By Alison Willmott P.R.O.

Comrades: The Branch will be hosting a Candlelight Service at the Cenotaph on May 7, 2004.

This event involves the children of our community, as well as the Legion veterans and general membership. Invitations will be going out to our local schools, in the near future. I am advised that attendance at past services has been good, and gratifying to those who took part. Please mark your calendar for this date.

The Anniversary Dinner and Honours and Awards night tickets are now available at the bar – \$25 per person. Please remember, members and one guest only.
Yours in comradeship.

LADIES’ AUXILIARY
Notes: Darts being held in Georgetown, Saturday, February 21 - Acton had three teams participating. Cribbage, February 28 @ Cooksville. Saturday, March 6 Acton will be hosting the Zone Euchre - Ladies please call Marg Bromby to have your name put on the list to play. Come out and support your Auxiliary. Saturday, March 20 “Fun Day” in Brampton - a bus will be supplied - come out and enjoy the day, this is the last event for our sports schedule. March 27 is the Branch’s Anniversary Dinner & Dance, I would like to see as many LA members as possible attend this event. Tickets are on sale @ the bar for \$25 each. Please, as Ladies Auxiliary members to Branch 197, come out and support your branch on this special occasion. Next General Meeting Thursday, March 5 @ 7:30.

Until then, Yours in Comradeship,
Peggy Harris, President.

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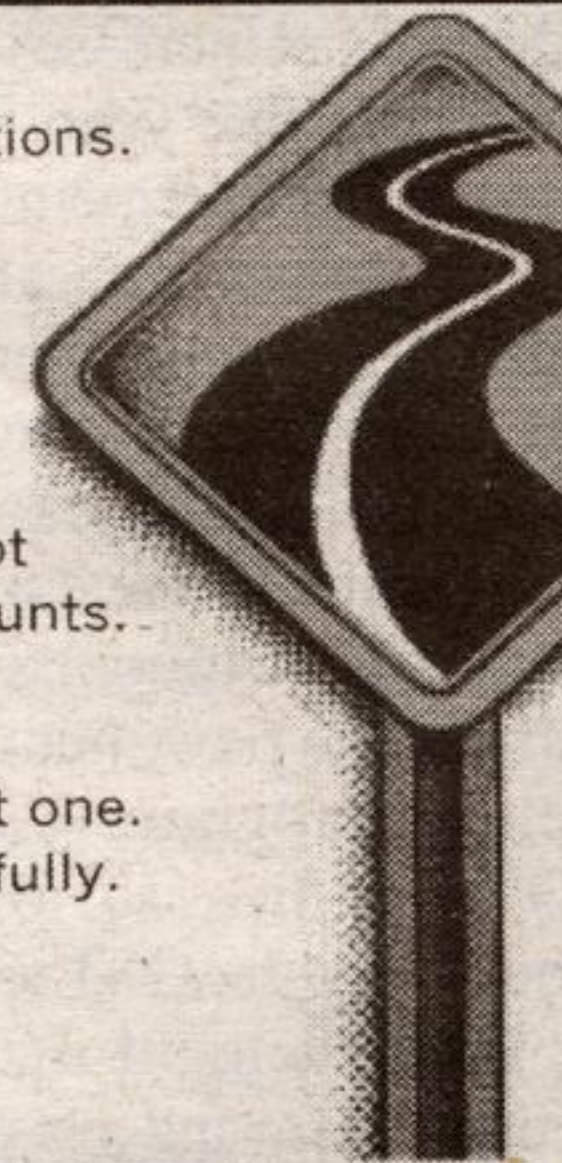
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- Rule #6:** Buy to keep.
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- Rule #8:** Make your decisions carefully.
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