

New drilling and grouting company comes to town

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

It was the shop, and staff's willingness to relocate to the Acton area, that ultimately sealed the deal for Geo-Foundations Contractors Inc.'s move to Main Street North last month.

The company, then located in Bolton, looked unsuccessfully over a year for a leased facility that would meet its needs. The,

GFC president Todd Edmunds learned that the former Acton Precision Millwrights building on Main Street North was for sale.

Initially, Edmunds said he rejected the idea of relocating to Acton because it would be too long a commute for some staff who lived in the east end of Toronto and Oshawa.

"I talked to my people and a lot of them decided that if we moved the business, they

would move too. Almost all of my key people who are relocating to the area, so in the long run, (the relocation) is going to work out very well for us," he said.

Edmunds describes GFC as a "specialist contractor in what we call ground modification work," adding the company began as a division of the USL Group of Companies in 1996, to get involved with pressure grouting, which is injecting cement or other materials

into the ground to cut off water flow or stabilize the ground.

In 2001, that division was split off into its own company - Geo-Foundations - and it acquired the assets of a bankrupt Georgetown company, but options were limited, Edmunds said, by the focus on the single-technology of grouting.

He said they looked for technologies well established in other markets, like the United States Europe,

and investigated why they weren't being used in Ontario.

"It's only because nobody has taken the initiative to introduce them and done all the legwork," Edmunds said.

"If all of the geo-technical conditions are similar and the market conditions are similar, then we will look at investment costs and the time it would take to develop that market, and see if it is feasible." A marketing portfolio highlights some of GFC projects and technologies, including the use of micropiles, soil anchors and soil nails to shore up foundations for a rail bridge near Brantford, the use of rock anchors to stabilize a gravity wall at a Manitoba Hydro generating station, and historic masonry grouting at the Peel Heritage Centre in Brampton and the Library of Parliament in Ottawa.

Edmunds said if they can't find the specialized equip-

ment they need to work in awkward settings, they will manufacture it at their shop.

He said the company doesn't think that "bigger is better, but that smaller and specialized is better," and works with joint venture partners in emerging technologies. During the peak season of April to December, GFC employees approximately 40 people, including engineering staff, project management and skilled labour. Off-season there is between 15 and 20 employees.

Edmunds said the company is flourishing because it provides innovative, environmentally friendly, cost-effective solutions to clients. He said they are also proud of the company's safety record of three years without a loss-time injury.

Edmunds said they are still getting settled in Acton, and are in the process of changing to local suppliers.

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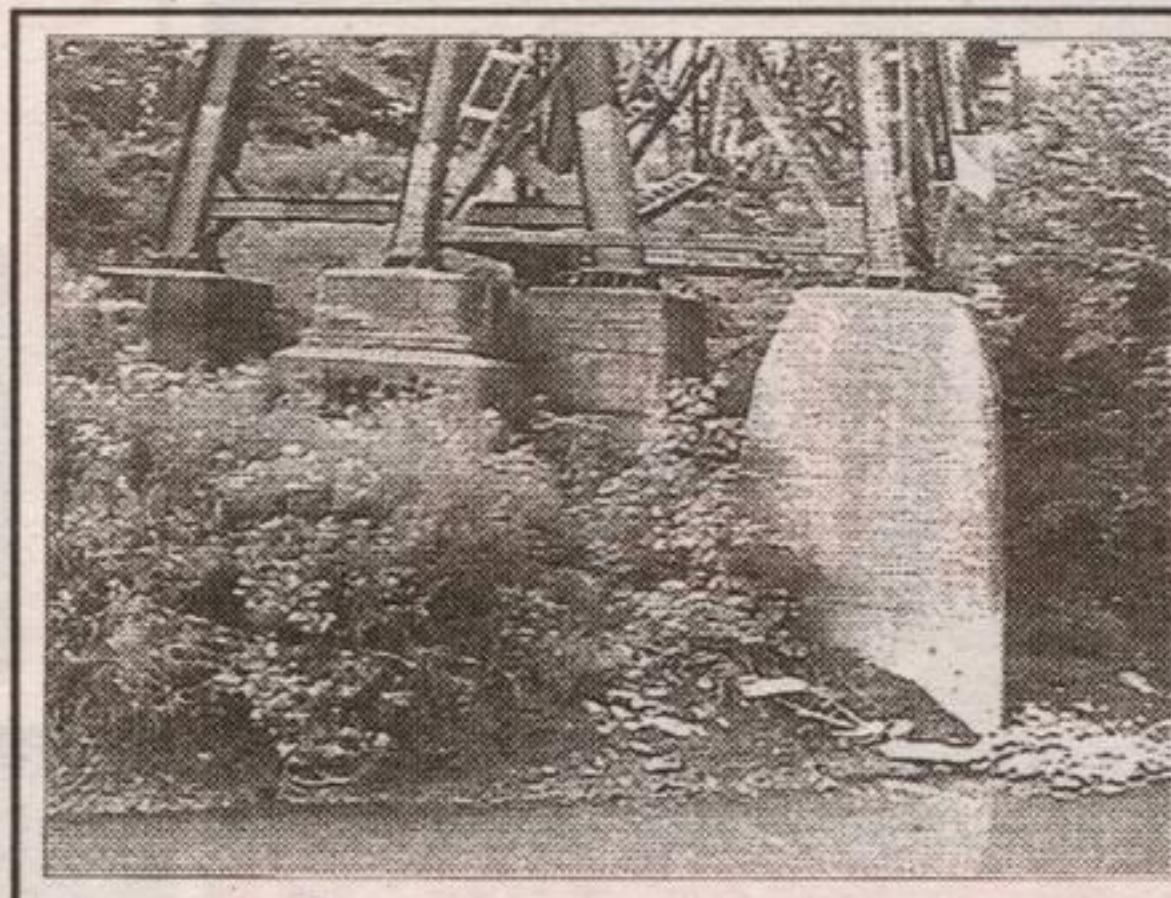
2 Mean Girls PG
Daily 7:00PM-9:00PM
Sat-Sun 2:00PM
(Starts Friday)

3 The Alamo PG13
Daily 6:45-9:10PM
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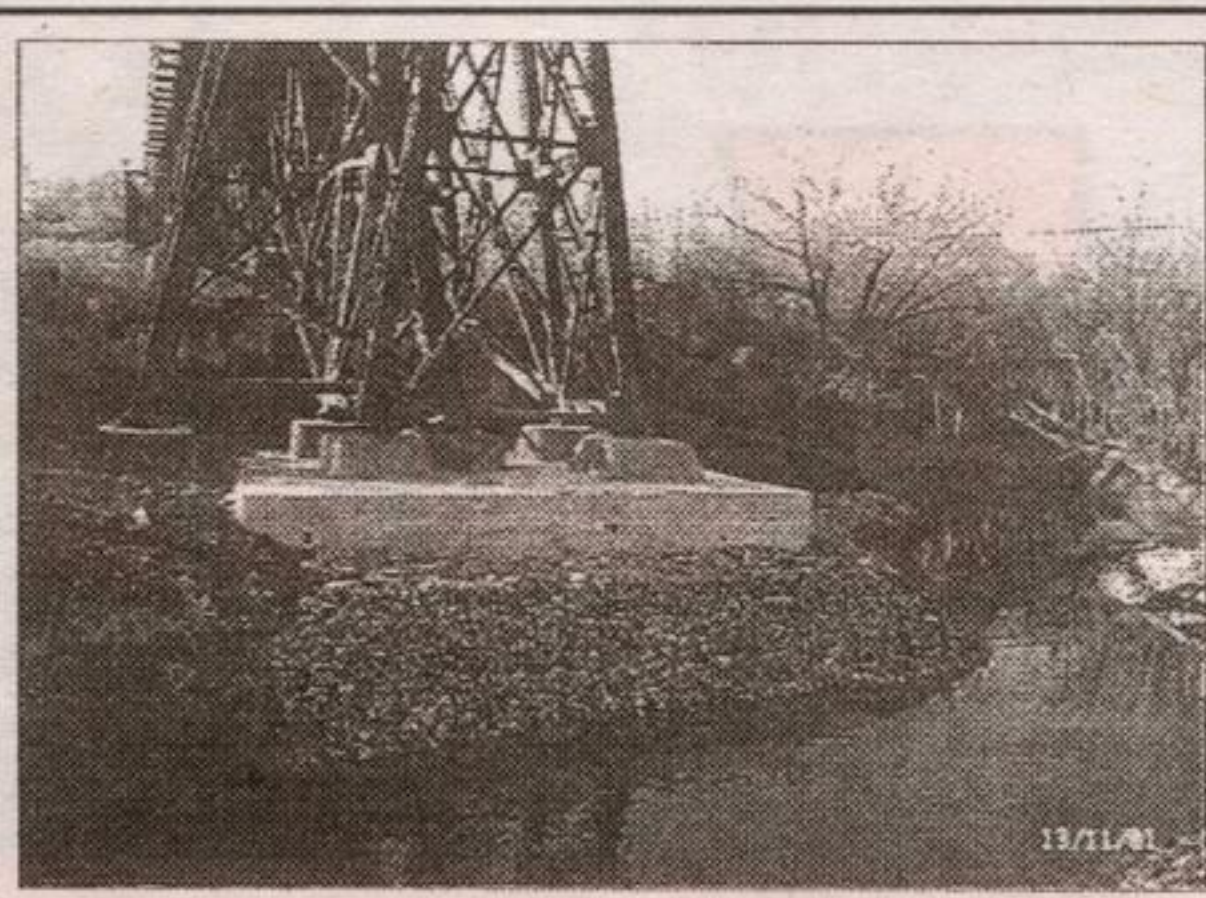
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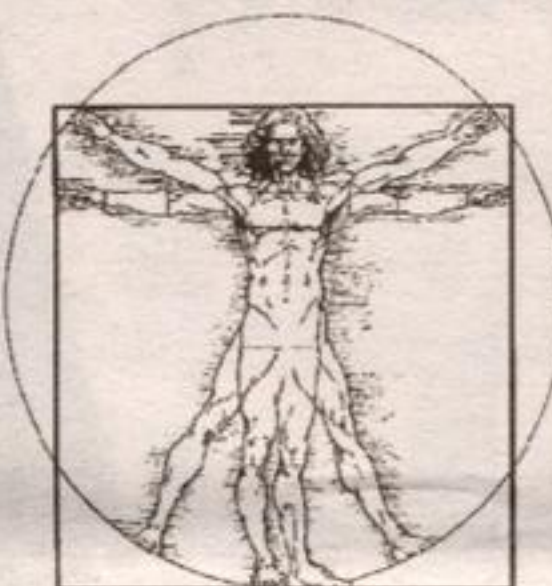
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Post office to become passport agency site

The Acton Post Office will become a receiving agent site for Canadian passport applications beginning Monday, according to Canada Post.

It will be easier to get travel documents in a number of areas as Canada Post, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade formalize a pilot project in remote areas where post offices were designated as passport receiving agencies.

Currently, there are 29 passport offices in Canada - many with long lines of frustrated applicants - and receiving agent pilot project involving 17 post offices in remote areas where staff can assess the completeness of passport application documents.

On Monday, that pilot project becomes a permanent working partnership between the two government departments, and an announcement will be made identifying the Bower Avenue post office,

and post offices in Georgetown, Oakville and Milton, as passport receiving agent sites.

Another eight receiving agent sites are scheduled to open over the summer including Sarnia, Orangeville, Owen Sound and Midland.

On Monday, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade spokesperson Susan Meunier, said the receiving agents can not approve an application.

"Post office employees will do a review for completeness once an application has been submitted," Meunier said, adding this will help avoid processing delays due to missing documentation of unusable photographs.

"That doesn't mean that they will approve entitlement - the approval of entitlement will be done by the passport office - but it means you can submit your application in your own community,"

Meunier said, adding an additional \$10 processing fee will be charged.

The passport office has a commitment to issue a passport within 15 working days if it is submitted to a receiving agent site. If applied for in person at a passport office, the standard processing time is 10 working days and 20 working days if it is mailed.

Currently, there are passport receiving agent sites in Barrie, Sudbury (two locations), North Bay, Bradford and Postal Station K in Toronto. There are two receiving agent sites in Prince Edward Island, and nine in the greater Montreal area.

"We want to make our services more accessible," Meunier said, adding 500,000 passports were issued in 1990, and last year, 2.6-million were issued.

Bower Avenue post office staff is being trained for the new service this week.



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