



CAN-TECH
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Caring and Confident

When it comes to student-housing, consider Can-Tech Construction experts. One of the most highly regarded builders in New Brunswick; Can-Tech combines a penchant for sustainability and energy efficiency with top quality construction and excellent value to provide clients with services that span from construction and renovation to design and drywall.

It's all in the name for Drew Fraser, owner of Can-Tech Construction. As a student in the civil engineering technology program at the New Brunswick Community College, Fraser combined his passions for the technical aspects of building with the emerging energy efficiency trend that began in the early 80s.

“I'm sitting there thinking: 'I like technical and I am Canadian,' so at the time I was going to call it Canadian Technical Construction,” Fraser said. “But to incorporate Canada in the name, you have the name approved in each province, and knowing that I was only working in New Brunswick, I shortened it up to Can-Tech.”



Founded in 1986, the company's client base stretches from Pugwash and Nova Scotia to Saint John, New Brunswick with Sackville and Amherst being their primary service area. An energy efficiency advocate for decades, Fraser has been an R2000 certified builder since inception.

"In Canada we have the R2000 program which was at the forefront of housing and realizing that house works as a system and not individual components," he said. "What this program does and continues to do is try and teach builders better practices for ener-

gy efficiency. Research Canada made model homes and analyzed existing homes."

"In the very early years we only built residential and energy efficient," Fraser continued. "This is where my love was – trying to get a better performing house. This is prior to heat pumps and there were still people using oil back then. It evolved over time to include home renovations and then we started to dabble into light commercial."

The move into commercial construction proved a success. Now, Can-Tech's revenue is



split quarterly – 25, 25, 25, 25 between new construction and renovation between their residential and commercial ventures. Headquartered in Sackville, the very small community with a population of 6,000, Fraser and his team of 12 full-time employees capitalized on the community’s commitment to higher education and student housing to find their niche project range.

“Sackville happens to be a university town, which is home to Mount Allison University –the top ranked undergraduate school in Canada,” Fraser said. “I had a tenant at Mount Allison many years ago and at that time there were no purpose built apartment buildings for students.”

“I had a piece of property with a vacant lot across the street from the campus and my friend, who’s an architect and I determined

that higher density – we could put more students per square foot of property than we ever could for the senior market,” Fraser continued. “So I decided to build a complex for student housing.”

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STUDENT HOUSING SUCCESS

Dealing with students and student housing can be a toss-up of positive versus negative. On the one hand, they're in continual flow in and out – every year brings with it a new crop to replace the graduating class. On the other, there are the horror stories and disregard for property, not to mention noise complaints, among other things.

Looking to put his travels from around the world into action, Fraser set out to build the

housing units after the street-faced style developments in Europe.

“I wanted a four-sided building with a courtyard in the center but the planning commission wouldn't go for it,” he said. “So we adopted a plan to a U-shaped configuration, so the first one was a complex of 9 townhouses – five bedrooms all linked together with outside entrances.”

“This was our very first foray into our area that anyone had ever built a student-housing

building and we have a mortgage insurer CHMC,” Fraser continued. “They were reluctant to do it because they don’t get into student housing. But they relented and they insured the mortgage.”

Perhaps a testament to his character and inventiveness, Fraser’s approach to building is unorthodox. Choosing to build in the off season and put the foundation in during the fall months and capping it until the winter, allowing his crew to work over a heated space and stay busy, while providing added



value and peace of mind to the tenants and Fraser himself.

“This aspect of the company employs two janitorial and two maintenance people continually,” he said. “I do things different. Although they’re independent townhouses, we clean the common areas every week, which

the students appreciate because they’re paying for it, the parents appreciate it because someone is maintaining the units, and I like it because at the end of the lease term I know what my building looks like beforehand.”

29 AND CONTINUING TO SHINE

Celebrating 29 years of success, Can-Tech continues to shine. And while the market they serve is small, their impact on the community has been monumental for everyone involved.

“I’ve been able to keep my employees and

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most of my sub trades that I've used for years," Fraser said. "We have two distinct groups: residential trades and commercial trades. We've been able to form very good working relationships with these people over the years, so when people hire us to do their residential or commercial job, they're getting some of the very best trades available."

Praising Can-Tech's team approach to project management and execution, Fraser is grateful for the strong relationships and bonds he's built with members of the college

community, allowing him to give back and nurture future generations.

"This has been a one-man show as far as the office and management of the company – I've done it all for the last 29 years. Recently I hired a carpenter with a business degree from Mount Allison," he said. "I told him to become a civil engineering technologist – it's a stepping stone between a tradesperson and an architect or engineer and you're more into the management. He helps me in the office, and eventually he'll take over or start his

own company.”

Serving the Sackville area comes with a sense of emotional attachment. Being a well-recognized and reputable business in the community has allowed Can-Tech to take on some special projects.

“We’re currently involved in three different buildings that are into 100 years old,” Fraser said. “We’re giving them a very significant facelift and it’s been challenging and fun and the trades that are involved are happy with the outcome. It’s rewarding because you see the customer with their appreciation of the change we’ve made.”

CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY

An integral trait in any customer relationship is honesty. In its purest form, honesty helps to see the bigger, clearer picture leading to a smoother process from start to finish. As an influential member of the community, Fraser and Can-Tech believe that laying it all on the line is the best way of doing business.

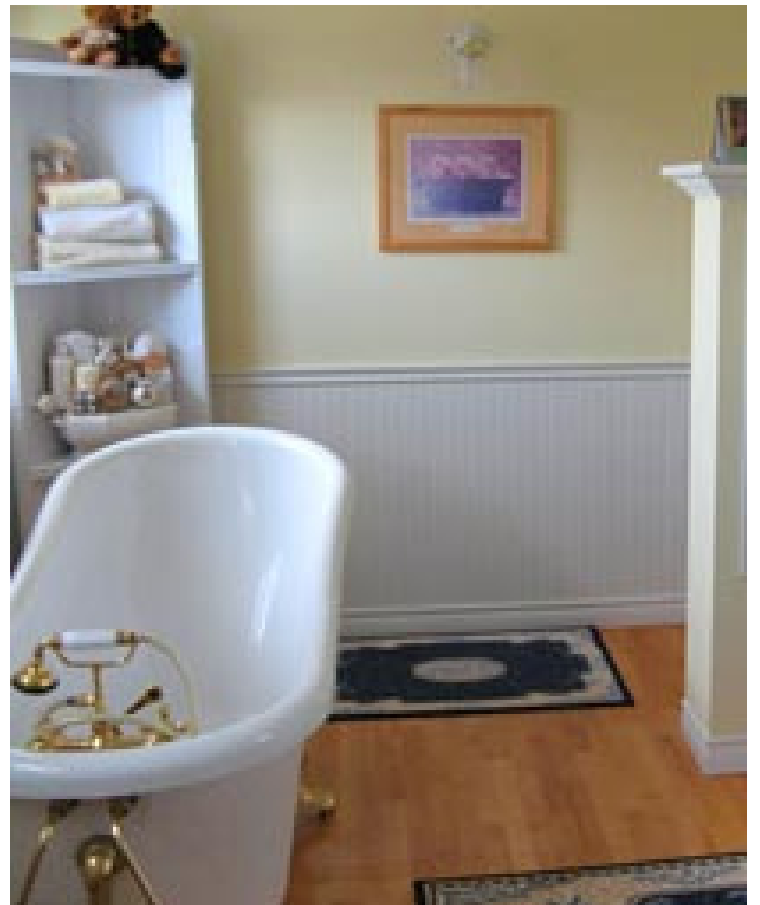
“Our customers, typically for renovation or new construction residentially, come to us

with a dream, sometimes with a picture out of a book or design from a website and of all the homes we’ve done, I’ve never had anyone come with a plan and say this is exactly what I want,” he said.

A specialist in architecture, Fraser’s technical training and experience allows him to combine ideas, dreams and desires into one plan and one budget – no matter if it’s a \$1 million home or a \$400,000 property. Understanding the necessity of compromising decisions remains an aspect where Fraser vows full transparency by presenting them with the information to make an informed choice.

“I tend to steer into the realm of being very up front and I tell people what I consider the best product to use and where the investment is done wisely,” he said. “You want to invest in very good quality windows and roofing and your heating or cooling system should be the most efficient that you can put in.”

“If I can build you a home that performs and uses half the energy, it’ll return money to you every year,” he continued. “The more money we invest in energy efficiency, it’ll pay you back years down the road.”





THE FUTURE

Having completed over 100 major projects and hundreds of smaller jobs, Can-Tech Construction's reputation is far-reaching and highly recognizable.

"We work in a very small area and it's a lot of you've done a project for somebody that person knows, and that's how it gets down to us," Fraser said. "An awful lot of our marketing is word of mouth."

Perhaps part of the allure and attention of

Can-Tech Construction and Fraser's approach to construction and home building is the forward thinking attitude that has been an ever present since the mid 80s and now proves to be a main point of differentiation in a marketplace that's constantly changing.

"For years, people never realized the benefits of energy efficiency," Fraser said. "They thought a house was a house and a building was a building. Now, it's really in the forefront of peoples' minds and how beneficial it is for our climate and our world and it's become very important."

The strong sense of teamwork that has been a mainstay at Can-Tech since the early days in 1986 will continue to guide them into the future. When reflecting on where he's been and where he plans to go, Fraser remains modest.

"I enjoy my work," he said. "The guys that I employ, our relationship is like a marriage. They can't survive without me and I can't survive without them. We don't necessarily love each other day in and out, but we perform and pull together to get that final product and make our clients happy."



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