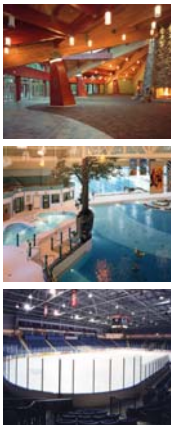




TASK
CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT INC.



Revelstoke Aquatic Centre.

THE GROWTH OF
INDUSTRY HAS GIVEN
RISE TO A NEW FORM
OF CONSTRUCTION
MANAGEMENT

TASK CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT INC. OF BURNABY has steadily gained prominence since its inception in November 1988, and given the current state of the industry in B.C., their services are arguably more vital than ever. The so-called 'boutique'-sized company does \$50-million in business annually, has a staff 26-strong and specializes in local government projects, primarily parks and recreation. Co-founders John Hiebert and John Bowser describe their modus operandi as "a pure form of agency construction management" that allows them to undertake a wide variety of assignments. >



**Whistler Telus
Conference Centre
(above); Cranbrook
RecPlex (left)**

“Our job is to shake the tree instead of waiting for the leaves to fall; to create a sense of urgency in meeting schedules, both in the design office and in the field.”

In this state of perpetual growth, even contractors with ample resources are being stretched thin and for some veterans it’s the equivalent of operating in a pressure cooker. The huge number of projects being green-lit throughout B.C. has come with sizeable headaches alongside its advantages. On one hand, all the work means coffers are being filled; on the other, deadlines are set in stone and any unexpected deviation from the budget becomes a calamity. Complicating matters is a steady rise in material prices and a chronic shortage of skilled trades people in this province and across North America.

Hiebert, president of TASK, and Bowser, co-owner and operations manager, point out that for a growing number of projects, the

solution is to fast-track production. Fast-tracking eschews the traditional linear approach of finalizing working drawings, undergoing tendering and building the required structure. Instead, drawings may be developed only to the point where ground can be broken on-site, at which point more drawings are completed and construction is segmented into packages.

Fast-tracking is intended to optimize efficiency and keep costs under control. But in the wrong hands, it can merely create chaos. In this topsy-turvy work mode, where materials are sometimes purchased while the project is still in the gestation stage, professionals are needed to preside over all aspects of the planning/construction process and

TASK

complete the assignment on time within an agreed budget. Enter Hiebert, Bowser and TASK.

The projects TASK has brought to a successful conclusion are numerous; highlights in the recreational field include the Cranbrook RecPlex, the Greater Vernon MultiPlex and the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre. Non-recreational highlights include the Whistler Telus Conference Centre for the resort municipality of Whistler and the Vernon & District Performing Arts Centre for the North Okanagan Regional District. Noteworthy achievements in the hospitality sector include the St. Eugene Mission Resort and Casino for the Ktunaxa Kinbasket Tribal Council, various elementary, secondary, middle and community schools in the education sector and a multitude of assignments in the commercial/industrial sector for companies such as A&B Sound and Purolator.

“The form of agency construction management we perform was invented in the U.S. in the early 1970s, during a time of high escalation, when the wait for fully-tendered documents inflated costs beyond control,” says Hiebert. “Frustrated owners would go back to the drawing board and cut out frills, only to return to square-one with tendering, which would create even more costs. The solution was to fast-track and to hire an agent who was well-versed in construction.”

Hiebert and Bowser have almost 70 years of industry experience combined. Hiebert is a graduate of the BC Institute of Technology’s Building Technology program and began his career as an estimator, contracts manager and superintendent on projects

in southwestern B.C. He later worked as a construction superintendent and project manager for numerous industrial, civil and commercial facilities, including the renovation of the Empress Hotel. He holds the Professional Quantity Surveyor designation and is Gold Seal certified (as a project manager) by the Canadian Construction Association.

Prior to launching TASK with Hiebert, Bowser was a partner in a Burnaby-based

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Vernon & District Performing Arts Centre



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construction management firm and led teams that completed large-scale projects, such as the BC Film Centre and facilities for Blackcomb Skiing Enterprises. He also worked as the lead superintendent for a major pre-cast concrete contractor (at TASK, Bowser's skills have been paramount in projects such as the Metropolitan Condominiums in Burnaby and Bosa Development Corp.'s Kihei Banyan in Maui). He too is Gold Seal certified by the CCA.

"Given our backgrounds, John and I tended to arrive at the same conclusions regarding the need for agency construction management, and upon that basis we decided to launch this company," Hiebert recalls from within TASK's deceptively simple brick headquarters, kitty-corner to BCIT. "Unlike those who offer management services, we don't do any of the actual work involved in building – this is one of the factors that enables us to be truly unbiased, whether it be giving input during design or supervising operations on-site." Intrawest Corp., which Bowser had previously worked for, helped launch TASK by giving the partners their first assignment: a 20-storey residential highrise structure located in Burnaby. TASK's skill in maintaining transparent processes and providing the developer with greater control over costs, quality and safety, led Bosa to assign TASK its second project, which took Hiebert and Bowser to Hawaii. The rest, as they say, is history.

Although TASK is a leader in the creation of parks and recreation facilities, its acumen makes them desirable as a consultant, or as an expert witness for litigation cases. "We also act upon curious or interesting jobs, such as the time a concrete truck fell through the roof of a building in Burnaby," says Hiebert. "Our assignment was simply to get it out. It took several weeks of planning and crane installation, and a few hours to lift the truck."

TASK assumes leadership in the boardroom and in the field, and one of Hiebert's fundamental tactics during meetings with key project personnel is to write the following words on a blackboard: appearance, cost, schedule and program. "I ask everyone in the boardroom to rank these components of a project in order of importance," he explains. "What I'm trying to do with this exercise is

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define how the owner and stakeholders will measure project success. This can then be conveyed to designers and applied to later decision-making and choices along the way.” By providing alternatives to all concerned parties, TASK facilitates the fast-track process.

Also crucial to the fast-track process is determining if the budget will cover the inflation that will inevitably occur during the extensive design/construction phase. “This requires performing straightforward arithmetic and it’s a delicate chore because nobody wants to hear that their budget isn’t sufficient for the facility they want to create,” says Hiebert. “But when you have 1.5 per cent per month cost escalation as we do today, and when budgets are established one year with the expectation that they will cover next year’s prices, you have a problem that must be nipped in the bud. We would rather be the ‘bad’ guys up front instead of the guys who nickel and dime you to death down the road.” TASK seizes every opportunity to rein in costs and one benefit of fast-tracking is that steel, gravel, equipment, lumber and other commodities can be purchased during the early stages of a project – as opposed to after the drawings and tendering processes are finished when point prices may have already skyrocketed.

TASK has become more and more involved in providing project management for clients. The difference between this and construction management, explains Hiebert, is the degree of influence: “Construction managers can influence a project’s design via the budget and the schedule, but project managers are mandated by the owner to administer the consultant contracts and generally direct the designers within the constraints of the budget.”

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TASK



**The Greater
Vernon
MultiPlex**

THE TASK PLEDGE

TASK'S CLIENTS receive the following guarantees:

- We promise excellence in the delivery of your project, from concept to ribbon cutting.
- We guarantee careful planning, accurate budgeting and workable schedules.
- We establish flexible controls and systems.
- We provide regular, easy-to-read reports produced with the latest technology.
- We anticipate problems, resolve conflicts and smooth the way for the efficient completion of your project.
- We are committed to the highest standards of worksite safety.
- We maximize the speed of completion and the quality of workmanship.
- We take a leadership role, as your representative, in the boardroom and on the worksite.
- We operate as cool-headed professionals, bringing over 30 years of experience, judgment and management skills to every project.
- We provide transparent and accountable processes applied to every project.

As usual, TASK is consumed with new assignments, several of them involving full PM and CM services to recreation projects in Nanaimo, Houston, Sechelt and Gibsons. TASK is also acting as a consultant to the City of Nanaimo on their downtown revitalization project. As 70 per cent of TASK's projects in British Columbia occur outside the Lower Mainland, they are expanding north of Prince Rupert and will be studying opportunities to work on projects in the northeast sector of the province.

"The message we live by is that it's all about the journey, not the destination," explains Hiebert while the headquarters bustle around him. "Many people have thick portfolios containing photos of completed buildings, but our achievements are behind the scenes: we're here to see that these projects reach fruition safely, on-time, according to specs and without a lot of lawyers clogging the process. Putting it another way, our job is to shake the tree instead of waiting for the leaves to fall; to create a sense of urgency in meeting schedules, both in the design office and in the field." ■

This promotional feature was prepared for TASK Construction Management Inc. by BCBusiness magazine's Special Advertising Features Dept. Writer: Robin Brunet. For information contact BCBusiness director of corporate features John Cochrane at 604-299-7311. Email: jcochrane@canadawide.com