

"We've spent the past year fine-tuning the document so that we are a genuine one-stop shop for clients," says Pomeroy. "The program is affordable, effective, fully warranted and transferable, which is especially useful for owners who want to sell their homes." PCM can also develop job-specific maintenance manuals, material service and replacement schedules and budgeting – in short, custom-tailored service.

Gioventu believes owners should adopt the PCM program as soon as they move into their new home. "People need to follow a comprehensive maintenance and operations plan from day one, otherwise repair costs grow exponentially."

In some ways, Pomeroy is a victim of his success in that the more people who adopt his maintenance program, the less remediation jobs he'll get in the long run – at least the million-dollar repair jobs that take many specialists and many months to complete. But he isn't complaining. "As the appreciation for maintenance builds, we find ourselves increasingly occupied with a greater number of smaller maintenance jobs," he reasons. To make even more people aware of the importance of the building envelope maintenance program, the PCM team is implementing extensive new marketing and business development programs that will ensure the company's success in the next phase of its business model.

The smaller, more plentiful assignments will enable PCM to expand beyond its geographical boundaries, including to Vancouver Island and elsewhere in B.C. As for the corresponding expansion of his work crew, Pomeroy intends to maintain a policy of comprehensive training and proactive retention tactics. "My crews work very hard and therefore PCM is very motivated to provide full benefits, performance incentives and recreational company activities," he says. "We also assist with apprenticeship programs."

Pomeroy is excited about the challenges that lie ahead. "Just as remediation transformed our construction company in the 1990s, these service-oriented projects will transform us again in coming years," he says. "And frankly, I'd rather keep people happy than be the guy who comes in after disaster has struck." ■

*This promotional feature was prepared for PCM Pomeroy Construction & Maintenance by BCBusiness magazine's Special Advertising Features Dept. Writer: Robin Brunet. For information contact BCBusiness VP of corporate features John Cochrane at 604-299-7311. E-mail: jcochrane@canadawide.com*

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# MAINTENANCE AND REMEDIATION

REMIATION IS A KEY COMPONENT OF BUSINESS AT PCM POMEROY CONSTRUCTION, BUT MAINTENANCE IS PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT ROLE

Bruce Pomeroy compares the necessity of his work to the upkeep of automobiles. "Everyone knows that unless you go for regular oil changes and the occasional tune-up, even the most expensive car will break down and cost a small fortune to repair," he says. "The same applies to the homes we live in, whether it's a condominium, a townhouse or a single-family residence. Unless it's properly maintained, the building envelope will suffer leakage or other failures, and mould, rot and other serious problems will result."

As president of Burnaby-based PCM Pomeroy Construction & Maintenance (PCM), Pomeroy is in high demand as a specialist in residential remediation work, and at any given time he and his crew are busy with dozens of restoration projects in the Greater Vancouver area, ranging from caulking replacement to million-dollar jobs.

There are few if any damaged homes that PCM can't restore to their original integrity or better. Although he enjoys giving his clients a sense of security and confidence, he derives even greater fulfilment by offering a solution that enables them to avoid the hassle of remediation to begin with: a maintenance program he developed five years ago for multi-family dwellings and recently expanded to include single-family homes.

The program is unique to B.C. and includes a strategic integration of four key components: building envelope inspections, customized maintenance manuals, maintenance and renewal plans, and construction, repair and restoration services, all undertaken by PCM. "People who have forked over large sums of money for restoration understand the benefits of such a program, but so too do a growing number of homeowners who simply want to protect their investment," says Pomeroy. In fact, the program is becoming so popular that Pomeroy envisions a time in the not-too-distant future when maintenance will dominate his firm instead of remediation. "If and when that happens, we'll be a fundamentally different company from the one my father started in 1964," he says.

That may be the understatement of the year. With a fleet of service vehicles dispatched daily to diverse locations plus equipment that, among other things, enables crews to create reverse atmospheres for the safe removal of mould, PCM already bears little resemblance to the company Cyril Pomeroy founded 44 years ago. That firm was concerned solely with construction, and a host of notable residential, commercial, industrial and institutional projects were successfully completed under the name Pomeroy Engineering and



Pomeroy Development Corp. Ltd., including the Kwantlen College's Newton campus in Surrey.

Bruce Pomeroy began his career in a venue that would later complement his role as a remediation specialist: he built houses, which afforded him an intimate education on good and bad construction techniques, how and why building envelopes fail, and the steps necessary to maintain the physical integrity of a home. "Back then, nobody in construction thought much about leaks, we just built as well as we could," he says. "But yes, the experience proved to be valuable later on when I got into remediation and especially when I was selecting all the ingredients that would constitute a comprehensive maintenance program."

Cyril and Bruce worked together on numerous construction projects through the late 1980s and early 1990s. And then, entirely by accident, they began riding the crest of a remediation boom, thanks to the infamous "leaky condo" scandal that plagued the Lower Mainland housing market throughout the 1990s. "It all began when someone we knew asked us to inspect the rot that had permeated his building," recalls Pomeroy. "At first we turned him down because we were construction, not

service, people. But we gave in, saw the extent of damage and ultimately repaired it. Before long, repair and renovation took over our business: within a few years it comprised half of our daily activities, and today it represents about 90 per cent of our work." The Pomeroy family launched PCM in 1991 to take full advantage of this market niche and became licensed by the Homeowner Protection Office.

It has been estimated that 80,000 condominiums in B.C. are leaky, and not all of

them are the fault of cost-cutting developers: the causes range from inappropriate design and shoddy construction to lack of inspections as well as owners patching up visible problems in order to facilitate a quick sale. Whatever the case may be, homeowners are the ones who pay for the damages, to the tune of \$30,000 on average. "A decade later, after non-stop work, about 60 per cent of the condos in question have been repaired, which gives you an idea of the magnitude of the problem," says Pomeroy.

Leaky condos compelled Pomeroy to develop a building envelope maintenance program for strata councils and property managers, but he was also motivated by the fact that B.C.'s perpetually wet climate can prove disastrous to any home if it isn't properly cared for. "We routinely encounter individuals or strata councils who fail to perform menial tasks like caulking replacement or repainting, and more complex tasks are frequently beyond their scope of capabilities," he says. "In the case of strata councils that adopt our program, money is set aside for maintenance and we do all the work."

Regardless of what upkeep has been done in the past, a maintenance plan is necessary to ensure that the building envelope continues to perform its intended function. PCM's program brings a building up to a maintainable standard and then provides an ongoing system of checks. "Our plan outlines expenditures over a 20-year period so there are no surprises for our clients," says Pomeroy. "Maintenance is prioritized with safety taking precedence, then damage, potential wear, and finally cosmetic appearance."

Tony Gioventu, executive director of the Condominium Home Owners' Association says, "Bruce's analogy of automobile maintenance is appropriate in many ways: for example, if you buy a new car and don't keep it in good shape, then the warranty is worth nothing. The same applies to houses," he says. He calls the PCM program "extremely well thought out, easy to understand and something that takes the worry out of building maintenance."

Art Doyle, business development director of the Building Envelope Program for National Home Warranty Programs Ltd., points out that PCM has completed many successful building envelope repair projects since the requirement for renovator licensing became legislated. "They are recognized by National Home Warranty as one of the larger qualified repair contractors in the Lower Mainland. PCM's maintenance programs, which include an ongoing program of common area review and renewals planning, are acknowledged by our insurance underwriters and by strata corporations as a valuable tool for mitigating risk and identifying potential problems before they become costly repairs."

Pomeroy has expended considerable efforts promoting the benefits of preventive maintenance. "Some people get it, some don't, but at least everyone has access to a solution," he says. The PCM program for single-family residences completes the company's evolution as a service-based building envelope solutions provider.

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