



VENSHORE MECHANICAL LTD.

by Christopher Cussat

PIPING AND MODULE FABRICATION SUSTAINS INDUSTRIAL CONTRACTOR

Above: Installing of a high pressure feedwater heater.

Right: VML Welder.

Far right: New Mmchanical and piping installation.

SOME PEOPLE ARE BORN INTO BUSINESSES. BUT SOMETIMES a person and a job fit so right together that the only possible explanation is it was meant to be. Such is the story of John Jurcik, president of Venshore Mechanical Ltd. (VML). The company was founded in 1987 by his father, Mike Jurcik, and Dan Godin. Both men had been in the contracting business for many years, and after Jurcik's father semi-retired in 1983, it did not take long before he was missing the action. Thus, VML was born. Jurcik recalls, "I was their first employee, and started at ground level in the tool crib—identifying tools and inventorying equipment, back when we had three half-ton trucks and four welding machines." The company

has grown substantially since then, now boasting over 30 half-ton trucks, and more than 100 welding machines. Not destined to remain working in the warehouse, Jurcik soon took an apprenticeship as a pipe fitter. "I worked all over northwestern Ontario with VML in mines, paper mills, sawmills, and hydro plants. Whoever said it must be easy being the boss's kid didn't know me. I would take on any job, anywhere, and I never settled for just doing one thing—I always wanted more." In the late 1990s, Jurcik found himself back in the office as mechanical superintendent. In 2002 his father and Godin both retired, for real this time, and Jurcik assumed the position of president.

“VML's strength comes from the high quality work, and vast experience of our senior management and trades-people.”

John Jurcik, President

**VENSHORE MECHANICAL LTD.
AT A GLANCE**

LOCATION: Thunder Bay, ON

AREA OF SPECIALTY: Industrial contracting and pipe/module fabrication

EMPLOYEES: 70+

YEAR FOUNDED: 1987

Today, VML is the largest industrial contractor and pipe fabricating company in northwestern Ontario. Jurcik explains, "We provide general contracting and pipe fabrication services, as well as industrial trades, such as pipe fitting, millwrighting, iron working, and boiler making." As far as clients, VML services the pulp and paper, gas transmission, power generation, and mining industries. Jurcik adds, "In addition to piping, our fabrication facility also supplies complete modules for petroleum, chemical, power generation and oxygen/nitrogen plants."

Working with such a diverse group of industries, which utilize a myriad of natural resources, Jurcik feels VML has an obligation to be environmentally conscious. "Based



in northwestern Ontario, it would be very difficult to say we haven't had to practice proper environmental actions. It is also a big concern to many of our clients, and in turn, it is reflected in the way they choose their contractors." In other words, companies that do not adhere to green practices may very likely lose contracts as a result. Jurcik adds, "Besides safety, it has become a large part of our business practice, because if you're not safe, or environmentally conscious, you simply don't get the job."

Even more than its high safety standards and concern for the environment, Jurcik believes VML's staff gives the company its competitive edge. "VML's strength comes from the high quality work, and vast experience of our senior management and trades-people."

Although VML's main office is located in Thunder Bay, the company is experiencing growth in other regions. "Right now we are working on a co-generation project in Sault Ste Marie," Jurcik shares. VML has also recently completed projects in Scarborough and Oakville. However, cost must always be considered when looking to expand. "We have had many offers to travel to Alberta because we are fabricating products for clients there, but with high travel-related costs, we felt it would be best to ship the products that we manufacture here to our non-local clients."

Much more is in the works for the company's future. For example, VML just opened a 26,000-square-foot pipe shop and Jurcik wants to get the word out. "We are now fabricators and I would like to promote that fact." But with any advancement comes challenges. He explains, "With the downturn in the pulp and paper markets, our local client base has diminished considerably. To keep our people working, we feel that fabricating pipe and complete modules here, and shipping them out, is the best way to go."

With a diverse, combined staff of over 70 full-time employees and unionized trades-people, Jurcik acknowledges that everyone has their own way of doing things. Nonetheless, in the end a good company is heavily anchored in the trust of its employees. He concludes, "I involve each one of my people and feed off their ideas. There are many ways of performing a task between doing it right and doing it wrong—I say give them some rope and see how it works." CBQ

Peterson Machine & Supply Inc. is a proud supplier to Venshore Mechanical. With over 65 years experience in the design and manufacture of industrial equipment and power transmission services as well as specialization in the pulp and paper and mining industries, Peterson Machine & Supply Inc.'s specialties include design and manufacture of materials handling systems, and rebuilding and manufacturing of pulp and paper and mining process equipment, and specialty machinery.

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