

# The Next Step

## Anchor Shoring Group is acquired by GFL Excavating Corporation – Offering demolition, excavation and shoring services together

By Barb Feldman

“There’s a lot of big news in our world!” said Dawn Tattle, the president of Anchor Shoring & Caissons Ltd. After six months of discussions and just a few weeks into the New Year, the Anchor Shoring Group was bought by GFL Excavating Corporation, a division of Green for Life Environmental (GFL). Tattle and Anchor vice-president Derrick Speakman have become shareholders in GFL and will continue their current roles at Anchor.

Anchor Shoring and Caissons was founded in 1968 by Dawn’s father, Gord Demetrick, and Gord Stack, and the two partners were soon joined by her uncle, Al Demetrick. The company expanded over the years, and by 1975 it included Banner Piling and Excavating, which specializes in pile driving, sheet piling and continuous flight auger projects, and Crown Drilling, formed to drill tiebacks.

“Anchor’s first office was in the basement of our house,” said Tattle, who began at Anchor as a site clerk when she was still in high school. “I loved the way we created and built things.

In construction, you create something tangible, something of value you can point to and say, ‘We had a part of that.’ This early exposure to the industry influenced by decision to go into engineering.”

After working for a structural consultant, she went back to Anchor and has been there since 1986. Stack’s son, Tom, who joined the company in 1970, became its vice president of operations. Speakman, who began to work for Anchor in 1987 as an estimator and project manager, became a partner and vice-president in 1995. In 1997, Tattle became president of Anchor Shoring.

### Women in construction

On the subject of being a woman running a construction business, Tattle said, “I wasn’t one of the pioneers – there



GFL and Anchor working on the Yorkdale expansion project

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were many women before me in construction.” Although, she conceded that when she started out, it did surprise some people.

Tattle recalled an experience when she was called to a site meeting just a week after her daughter was born.

“I brought my newborn into the trailer with 25 men. Everybody was startled for a moment, then just stood up and moved things around to make room for her baby seat – they were really surprised. Now, people are more open to flexible work hours and understand that there are things people have to deal with in their home lives,” she said.

“Studies have shown that companies that have a mix of men and women decision-makers are more successful, as they

have a broader perspective and a more creative range of ideas,” said Tattle. “There are sound business reasons to do it as well.”

Tattle was chosen as one of Canada’s Top 100 Most Powerful Women by the Women’s Executive Network in both 2008 as a “Trailblazers and Trendsetter” and then again in the “Professionals” category in 2010, and that year she also received the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Engineering 2T5 Mid-career Achievement Award. She is a director of the Toronto Construction Association and a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Engineering. Although she is proud to be a role model for young women considering careers in engineering or construction, she says that awards such as these are an honour for everyone at Anchor Shoring.

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## IMPROVING SAFETY FOR VULNERABLE WORKERS

“Safety has always been a core value with me,” said Tattle. She began by serving on the Ontario Ministry of Labour’s Vulnerable Worker Task Group and was subsequently appointed in 2013 by the Minister of Labour to serve on The Prevention Council, which focuses on provincial-wide safety across all industries in Ontario, not just construction. Recently, Ontario amended its *Occupational Health*

*and Safety Act* to specify new technical and operational safety measures and procedures for rotary foundation drill rigs, and as of July 1, 2016, will require drill rig operators to be trained and certified. It is the only Canadian jurisdiction to do so.

Tattle also lectures part-time at the University of Toronto’s Civil Engineering program, where she speaks about

safety in construction, to educate young engineers “about their rights as workers and what to look for, what to expect on a construction site,” she said. “I’d like them to be aware of the hazards that exist and be prepared to know how to look after themselves. It isn’t enough just to be careful of what you’re doing – you have to be aware of what everyone else is doing.”



Anchor rigs at the Yorkdale expansion project

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“It’s because of Anchor’s achievements that I’ve received these awards – and any time you can get positive press for construction, that’s a good thing, too,” she said.

In its almost five decades, Anchor completed more than 4,500 projects across Ontario and in Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Quebec, including foundation work for many of Toronto’s high-profile buildings: the Toronto Eaton Centre, many of the Financial District’s high-rise buildings, the Toronto Transit Commission’s Yonge Sheppard Station, various phases of its York-Spadina subway extension and Yonge and Leslie stations, Toronto Hydro’s Simcoe Tunnel expansion, the Hospital for Sick Children and North York General Hospital, MaRS Discovery District, Royal Ontario Museum, One Bloor East, the Air Canada Centre and Maple Leaf Square and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, as well as the Union-Pearson (UP) Express Link, OPG Darlington and Windsor Casino. They also installed more than a thousand caissons for high mast lighting and overhead signs on Ontario’s 400-series highways.

### Strengthening GFL’s ability to complete large-scale contracts

By 2015, Anchor employed a workforce of 180; they will join the GFL Environmental team of more than 2,000 employees. Since its establishment in 2007, GFL has expanded to eight provinces and completed numerous acquisitions. In addition to its commercial and residential waste removal and management services, it already offered site excavation, remediation and demolition as well as contaminated soil treatment.

According to GFL’s announcement on Jan. 18, 2016, GFL Environmental’s CEO and founder, Patrick Dovigi, says that adding earth retention and foundation systems to the capabilities of GFL Excavating Corporation has strengthened the company’s ability to complete large-scale contracts in the significant number of infrastructure, commercial and residential projects that have been announced for the Province of Ontario in the coming five years.

“Shoring is a natural extension to some of the other work GFL does – they’re two complementary businesses and there’s a synergy between us,” said Tattle. “Shoring demands very high quality standards throughout all phases of the work, from design through construction, because it protects streets and buildings and supports the soil during the excavation phase of the project.”

Being able to offer demolition, excavation and shoring services together “was just the next step in our future, expanding our services to clients,” she said. Having more control of the site itself could lead to improved safety, as well.

Anchor has been COR™ certified by Canada’s Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (IHSA), which recognizes companies for their health and safety management systems.

“The coordinated flow of materials and equipment is key to the safety and success of a project,” she said.

Anchor and GFL had already worked together on multiple projects, such as on Toronto’s Yorkdale expansion project, where GFL worked on the excavation and demolition phase.

“Yorkdale was a complicated job with a caisson wall supported by tie-backs and some micropiling work that had to be done in low-headroom conditions, which is a slower and more



Anchor and GFL previously teamed up to work on Toronto’s Yorkdale expansion project

complicated process,” since the steel members in the micropiles were coupled and in shorter sections, said Tattle. The project involved installing 4,250 square metres of caisson wall; 4,180 square metres of soldier pile and lagging; 7,740 metres of vertical drilling; 460 holes (205 piles and 255 fillers); 453 tonnes of steel; 6,000 cubic metres of concrete; 500 tiebacks with a total of 7,620 metres of tieback drilling; and 65 micropiles with 762 metres of drilling.

“The commitment of Patrick Dovigi to safety first was key to our decision to join their team,” said Tattle. “We have witnessed first-hand how experienced and committed their world-class team of safety professionals really are.”

### Designing creative solutions for challenging problems

Anchor puts an emphasis on value engineering, often proposing more efficient and less costly solutions to various foundation challenges or modified equipment to suit specific projects.

“Modifications to equipment to suit specific projects are something we’re very creative about,” said Tattle. Look at Anchor’s reverse-circulating tieback drill, for example.

“[It] allows us to sit at a higher level. So where there are poor ground conditions, we can sit our machine up at grade and drill through a berm,” said Tattle. “If we see a job that has a need for something we don’t have or isn’t commercially available, we’ll brainstorm and say, ‘How do we do this?’”

In addition to working on projects with GFL, “We will continue do our work of shoring, pile driving, shortcreting, micropiles and caissons, and continue to bid and work on projects in a design build capacity as Anchor Shoring,” said Tattle.

Construction is deadline-driven, and delays or disagreements between trades are big risk factors on a project for developers, she says.

“Below-grade work is one of the most difficult parts of a project – soil conditions are often challenging, there’s the potential for contaminants in the ground and inclement weather and we’re often working in tight quarters and need close coordination between the trades – all factors that can impact the schedule. The ability to minimize risk is something that clients are really looking for,” said Tattle. “The support of GFL improves our ability to minimize these risks and, together, we can take on a larger role in projects.”