

# Canada Strong

Innovation, founder's vision and acquisitions fuel Delta Elevator's growth as it celebrates 50 years.

by Anette Northridge

It was 1956 when the Guderian family settled in Waterloo County, Ontario. Like many other immigrants from Germany, they were seeking to start a new life after the devastation of World War II. Walter Guderian was fortunate to arrive in Canada already having learned a trade — a trade that would be his career focus for the next 60 years.

As an elevator mechanic, Guderian found employment quickly with Otis. After spending 10 years learning about the elevator industry in Ontario, his entrepreneurial spirit led him to leave the security of an established company to launch a business of his own. Delta Elevator Co. Ltd. began in 1967 and is now celebrating 50 years in business.

Over the next 37 years, Guderian served as president and guided Delta through many challenges: growing the customer base, hiring and developing employees and investing in infrastructure. Guderian retired in 2004 but still

serves as chairman of the board and helps guide company strategy. One of the first members of the Canadian Elevator Contractors Association (CECA), he was recently inducted as an honorary member of the association (p. 164).

When Delta started, it was a one-man maintenance business that Guderian ran from his home. After stops in ever-larger facilities in Kitchener, Canada (on Louisa and then St. Leger streets), the company grew into a full-service organization with three branch offices and more than 150 employees, including field staff, engineers and production workers. The head office and main operations continue to be located in Kitchener.

Today, Andrew Friedel serves as president and CEO. Friedel leads the senior management team responsible for Delta's strategy and operations. The business still has a small-company feel and continues to adhere to the same values Guderian imbedded in the

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Since 2000, administration, manufacturing, local field operations and the main parts depot have been located in a more-than-60,000-sq.-ft. facility in Kitchener.



Delta provided vertical-transportation equipment at La Tour CN Tower in Toronto, its fastest-growing market.

company's culture half a century ago. It is an approach that dates back to his apprenticeship in Germany, and it is something customers and employees still appreciate today.

Delta remains a Canadian company that designs and manufactures its own products, including accessibility, limited use/limited application (LU/LA), freight and passenger elevators. John Guderian, vice president (VP) of Manufacturing, was instrumental in developing its Lean manufacturing system. By manufacturing in-house, the company is able to provide architects and general contractors with customizable solutions and accommodate adjustments to building designs on the fly.

The addition of mechanical and electrical engineering departments provided Delta with the technical expertise to invest in R&D on a continual basis. Mike Tikal, VP, Mechanical Engineering, has led the development of notable products, including a LU/LA elevator (2004), machine-room-less elevator (2008) and various entrance systems.

First released in 1999, Delta's distributed multiprocessor controller allowed the company to remain one of the few domestic suppliers of fully integrated elevator systems capable of providing customers with a true "Made in Canada" solution. Andrew Sinclair, VP of Electrical Engineering, has been responsible for its continuous refinement to meet current needs.

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In recent years, Delta established branch offices in Toronto, Peterborough and London, Canada. Since 2000, administration, manufacturing, local field operations and the main parts depot for maintenance and service have been located in a more-than-60,000-sq.-ft. facility at 509 Mill Street in Kitchener. The facility has undergone two additions and substantial renovations over the past 17 years.

Delta has also grown through acquisitions. In 2006, it purchased and integrated TriCity Elevator from Jeff Righton. While the acquisition initially provided a doorway to the residential high-rise market, it was the addition of Righton to the Delta senior management team that has proved to be the most beneficial aspect of the transaction. He is now VP of Operations — Greater Toronto Area, Delta's fastest-growing branch.

Delta's growth has been funded internally, the same way Walter Guderian grew the company in its early years. Delta's chief financial officer, Tim Fisher, is a strong proponent of this risk-minimization approach and believes it is one of the

reasons behind the company's success.

As an active community member, Delta contributes to local charities, including the Grand River Regional Cancer Centre, the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, Supportive Housing of Waterloo and MennoHomes Inc. The company also supports the community

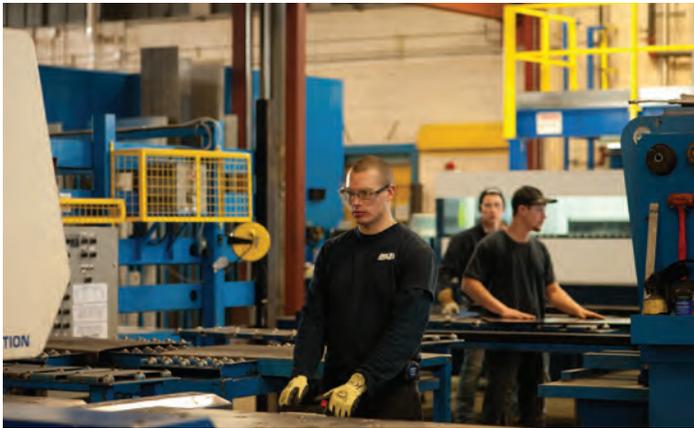
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Delta founder Walter Guderian as a young apprentice and more recently



Maintenance Mechanic Steven Kschesinski is Delta's longest-serving employee, having worked with Guderian for nearly 30 years.



At work in the Delta factory

by recruiting locally, promoting from within and hiring students from local universities and colleges. It grooms its elevator mechanics internally through an apprenticeship program. This results in apprentices who share the same values and have technical capabilities to be at the top of their field. In-house training facilities and programs ensure that, once licensed, elevator mechanics remain qualified.

The company has always placed a high value on its employees, and continues to do so. There are more than a few employees with tenures exceeding 25 years, including senior management team members, maintenance mechanics and supervisors. Elizabeth Peters, VP of Human Resources, is one of these. She has taken the lead role in ensuring social events like annual golf days, weekend barbecues, boat cruises and Christmas parties create a sense of family among the employees.

Delta is a strong supporter of the elevator industry and has a long connection to CECA. Walter Guderian, past president, was one of CECA's founding members in 1973. He was pleased to see the organization develop and become an effective part of the national elevator industry.

More recently, Delta's VP of Field Operations, Brian Elliott, served as CECA president from 2015-2017 and was instrumental in its recent growth in membership and national influence on the development of a standard maintenance control program for elevators.

Today, Delta remains a family-owned business with deep roots in the community. The company looks forward to serving its customers for another 50 years.

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