

MUNRO LTD OWNS THE ROAD WITH MACK

John Munro doesn't think much of conventional wisdom. While competitors focus on specialized programs, he provides comprehensive service. While others outsource, he brings those capabilities in-house.

That contrarian philosophy has helped build Munro Ltd. from six employees and C\$100,000 in sales when his father founded the company in 1957 to 310 employees and more than C\$100 million in sales annually.

Munro Ltd. makes infrastructure products, everything from bridge girders, beams, concrete pressure and gravity pipe, steel pipe and subway tunnel segment liners.

As president of the company, Munro has grown the business by meeting the customers' needs. "We're a total solution provider, a one-stop location for everything in development, whether it's highways or water main systems or subdivisions. We provide customers with all of the products they need. That's enabled us to grow right through this recession."

Munro Ltd. makes its product in a 474,000-square-foot (44,000-square-meter) facility in Utopia, Ontario and does some of its work on the jobsite. (The company has a field service group of 14 people to weld pipe.) But to provide comprehensive service, Munro had to take control of its own delivery fleet.

"We used to deliver our products in the past. Then we concluded that was outside our core skills, that we should sub that out to people who are more professional at it," Munro said. "In the end, our experience was that all of the trucking brokers really weren't very good at their core business."

So two years ago Munro called Peter Calaguiro at Mid-Ontario Truck Centre and ordered 14 Mack® Pinnacle™ axle forward tractors with 505-HP MP8 engines, 18-speed transmissions and 46,000-pound-capacity rear axles. Along with the equipment, Munro and his employees, logistics manager Jenny Ogden and plant supervisor B.J. Cochrane, opted for a full-maintenance service agreement.

John Munro is pleased with the purchase. "We're interested in efficiency and whether the equipment is going to lower our costs. We want equipment standardization and Mack gave us that. We could spec them so the drivers are comfortable, with the power that exactly suited our need. I like the published fuel economy. Fuel economy and price are big deals for us."

Munro was also concerned with his company's image, another issue solved by Mack. "We're very conscious of brand," he said. "We did a comprehensive survey in the summer to see if customers and contractors see the company as we do. The only correction we got was maybe our delivery wasn't as good as the rest of the company. By owning the trucks we're able to put the drivers into our uniforms. The fleet is new. We can use GPS systems. That separates us in the marketplace."

Ownership has its privileges.

