

WORD OF MOUTH IS PERRIER'S BEST ADVERTISEMENT

By Lynne Wells

Mike Perrier knows the value of word of mouth advertising. He built his business on the recommendations of happy clients. Perrier's Concrete Homes has grown steadily over the past five years, building ICF homes in and around Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Perrier is proud of his business, which employs three full-time workers who are all deaf. Perrier himself communicates with a mix of verbal and sign language.

"We're very comfortable working with each other, which we wouldn't be if we were working elsewhere," Perrier says. "Communication would be difficult."

Is that a problem when working with customers and other contractors? "Not at all," Perrier says. "We establish solid relationships with our suppliers, customers and other contractors on a job site. I'm very fussy. I like to say that hearing people have golden mouths, but we have golden hands and that is what satisfies customers."

Over the past five years, Perrier has built more than 50 residential homes using the Integra-Spec ICF system. "It's a good lock-in system with little waste," he says. "Other systems are good too, but I'm more confident using Integra-Spec. I find it very versatile."

Prior to starting his own company, Perrier worked as an aluminum window and door technician and then taught construction at Nova Scotia's School for the Deaf in Amherst, which is now

closed. He always had an interest in energy-saving construction techniques and built his own home using Integra-Spec. He was so pleased with the results he thought others would want their homes built that way too, so he launched the business. But he was nervous.

"I was afraid to get going due to my low education," Perrier says. "My deafness had held me back, but I discovered that you can always learn, no matter how old you are, and there are people who are willing to help."

Things have worked out very well. "I was hunting for work, but now they hunt for me," he says.

Unlike wood-frame carpentry, Perrier says ICF is not for do-it-yourselfers. "You need a lot of knowledge to get the full benefits of an ICF home," Perrier says. "The concrete mix is very specific (3000 psi, 6" slump, no vibrator) and the forms must be constructed properly. All the concrete suppliers know me and whom we use as a concrete supplier can depend on location, but we like working with Sackville Ready Mix. They're very good to us and take our deafness into account on the job site. They're very careful with the pump, because of course we can't hear it."

Perrier and his crew work as sub-contractors in the residential building market, much like plumbers and electricians.

"Our work is very specific and is crucial to the finished product. We meet extensively with the general contractor, other sub-contractors and the homeowners to make sure we've got every design requirement, every need included in our design."

Demand is on the rise for ICF homes. Perrier and his crew have worked through the winter for the past two years. Perrier is cautious about his growth plans for his company. "I don't want to get so big that we don't enjoy what we do," he says. But they do enjoy challenges.



Mike Perrier, Perrier's Concrete Homes, Dartmouth, N.S. is one of few residential contractors in Atlantic Canada who builds exclusively with insulating concrete forms (ICF). Mike and his all-deaf crew have become specialized with the IntegraSpec® ICF wall system over the past five years, raising the building envelope only. This beautiful single-storey home, built last summer, overlooks Lake Banook in Dartmouth.

"You can do any shape around windows and doors with ICF and we like to work on complicated designs," Perrier says.

Perrier is working on a 7,200 sq.ft. ICF home in Dartmouth right now that will house a swimming pool on the second floor.

"We've never done that before and we really enjoy working out the design specifications," he says. "There's nothing we can't do."

Because of Perrier and his company's skills, use of the Integra-Spec product has skyrocketed in Atlantic Canada.

"We're not the only ones working with ICF," Perrier says. "But we're one of the few who work with the Integra-Spec system everyday. We're good at what we do."

Perrier's Concrete Homes

Specializing in concrete homes, Integra Spec Blocks, I.C.F.

CELL: 830-8832 HOME: 435-0222

11A Memorial Drive, Dartmouth NS B2W 3N9 • mike_perrier@hotmail.com

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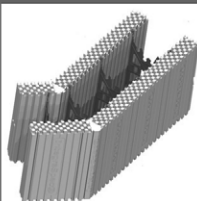
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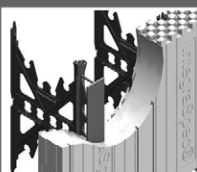
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