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Article

New N.S. hazmat firm meets local needs

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MILTON, N.S.—When Sherri Elliot and her husband Jason formed Jaspro Cleaning Services on Nova Scotia's South Shore in 2004 they never imagined that a janitorial cleaning business would lead them into an entirely different field: hazardous materials abatement. More specifically, asbestos, mould and lead paint remediation.



Bryce Samuals of Jaspro Environmental stands in front of the Milton Christian Church in Milton, NS. Samuals is part of the crew removing asbestos in the church. - Photo: Barry Tomalin, Jaspro

The seed for the new business was planted when Jaspro was retained by the Nova Scotia Lands (NSL) — a provincial Crown corporation responsible for developing Crown-owned land in Nova Scotia — at a partially decommissioned pulp and paper plant near Milton, N.S.

In addition to cleaning services, Jaspro's duties included minor demolition, such as ripping up old carpets in the plant. That work led to the discovery of tiling that contained asbestos and workers also uncovered mould.

Finding hazardous materials onsite resulted in work stoppages until NSL could secure a qualified hazmat abatement contractor to remove the toxic materials.

That's when the idea of starting up a hazardous materials remediation business came to Elliot. "There was no one that I knew on the South Shore that did this kind of work," she says.

The couple and five of the cleaning company's employees went to Halifax for training in asbestos, mould and lead paint removal to qualify for certification through the Nova Scotia Construction Safety Association and the Workers Compensation Board.

They also took courses in confined space, fall protection and scaffolding assembly and operation.

Today — about a year later — the Elliots have formed Jaspro Environmental Services Limited and are commencing their first asbestos job — helping to remove 15,000 square feet of an asbestos coating on the plaster walls of the Milton Christian Church in Milton, N.S.

She says the asbestos contractor awarded the job "pushed to have us on board with their project."

The abatement contract is part of a large project to move a storey of the church — including the cathedral ceiling — to a new foundation.

The transition from mopping floors to removing hazardous materials has gone down nicely for about eight employees of the cleaning company which employs about two dozen people in the South Shore.

"They are very excited to take on the challenge," says Elliot, adding that those employees get a better wage for the hazmat remediation work. "It offers them a brighter future than just sweeping or mopping up floors."

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