

BUSINESS

Fellfab is fabulous, says Boeing of Hamilton firm

It's curtains for Hamilton manufacturing — they make them

STEVE ARNOLD

The Hamilton Spectator

The Hamilton company that clothed the space shuttle's robotic arm has found its way into another rarefied orbit.

Fellfab Limited is one of 15 companies named Supplier of the Year by American aircraft maker Boeing Inc. — a global giant with a \$62-billion-a-year supply chain of more than 13,000 companies from 47 countries.

For Fellfab president Eric Taylor the honour is a clear sign there's life in Hamilton manufacturing. The company is located on Barton Street East near Kenora Avenue.

"We've done quite well," Taylor said of the award presented in mid-April. "We fly a little bit under the

radar, but we're not only still here we're adding employment and expanding."

Founded 63 years ago, there's very little Fellfab hasn't made over the decades for its customers in the aviation, medical, telecommunication, military, industrial, aerospace and transportation sectors. Products include all the curtains in any new Boeing aircraft, cushions for passenger trains, the first-class seats for Delta Air Lines travellers, knapsacks, sleeping bags and body bags for the Canadian army and, of course, the famous fabric clothing for the space shuttle's robotic arm.

"We started by making tarps for trucks, but now we focus on engineered textile solutions and value-added products," Taylor said.

Fellfab is still owned by the Fell

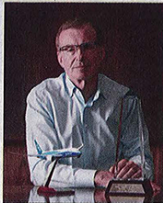
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The 10-year contract for Boeing's curtains is a major focus for the company today, Taylor said, and it's a demanding piece of business — Fellfab's award was partly for delivering on-time, defect-free products more than 99 per cent of the time for 12 months.

That's a level only 460 of Boeing's suppliers around the world have managed to meet.

"Hitting that level is almost an entry point with these guys, it's certainly not a coasting point," he said. "Getting an honour like this is a little humbling, a little overwhelming and really causes you to reflect on the good work your people are doing."

The company has more than 100 employees.



CATHIE COWARD, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Eric Taylor is president of Fellfab.

As with many manufacturers, Taylor said the nature of their business has changed over the years. It used to be that the Canadian military would present a supplier with detailed plans and drawings for the products it wanted. Now Fellfab is

presented with a need and left to create an answer.

Meeting that style of business has required some hefty investments — last year alone the company spent \$300,000 on new 3D software and a development group.

That kind of spending, he said is necessary to keep the company's North American production processes at top efficiency.

"The pressure on us are huge in the international markets," Taylor said. "We are very process-oriented because on some projects we're competing against companies that pay \$2 an hour or have people sewing at home."

Boeing's suppliers of the year include 11 American companies, one university and single companies from Sweden, Japan and Canada.

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