

Howell's recent changes – career and location

www.BillHowell.ca 25Dec2012 (with minor additions 26Dec2012)

In late September I decided to leave the Mining and Mineral Sciences Laboratories (renamed “CanmetMINING” last spring) of Natural Resources Canada in Ottawa, a federal government department. In all, I put in 21 years of service, but with the Budget 2012 reductions, on 10Apr2012 the new (reincarnated) and small Recycling Technologies” R& D program that I managed was cut. This was probably the right decision to make given the necessary recourse cuts required by the laboratory, although it was a nasty surprise for scientists who had just been moved into my program (and for me as well!). I personally agree with the budget cuts and reallocations, feeling that there is a need to provide a “safety margin” for potential further economic problems, and to prepare for long term pressure from Boomer aging with its health care, pension, and debt issues.

I put nominally 50% of my time from 10Apr2012 through to the end of September into projects, and 50% into chasing potential opportunities within the government, as well as learning and calculating the options and conditions of my situation. (Actually, the % spent on projects/ small responsibilities was probably closer to 60+ %). However, by late September, once key issues affecting the conditions for several options became a bit more clear (never 100% clear), I decided that it was a good time to leave the federal government and seek an entirely new career. My “Departure Date” from the federal government was 22Oct2012.

My immediate tasks were that of :

- **Real Estate Salesman** - Too heavy a financial burden even before the job loss (I had slowly been preparing to sell since spring 2011!), it was imperative that I sell my house with the cuts. I elected for a “sale by owner” arrangement through www.ComFree.com (flat fee for MLS listing etc of almost ~1 k\$ total), also using my own special website www.86Anderson.ca). I was quite happy with the ComFree structure and service (notably Frank Minoli, Norma Patenaude, Sarah Dallicardillo and others). I offered 2.5% (the maximum amount one usually sees) for the buyers' agents. The house was sold to a young, recently married couple, who were willing to undertake the normal ongoing upgrades and repairs required of an old (1903) house. Its location at the corner of little Italy and Chinatown in a fast-improving area helped sustain values and speed the sale (at least, that's the way that I tell it). Being fearful of my own finances and the general economy and housing market, I was happy to get this out of the way.
- **Repair & renovation] guy** - My website www.86Anderson.ca was specific about issues and planned repairs, which took me 2 months to almost complete (2 days past the closing date!). Most notable were :
 - **[Soil, gravel, rock, brick, concrete] removal** (25-28 tonnes) - I felt that I needed exercise, so I did this all by shovel & wheelbarrow. The key idea was to vastly improve drainage at the back, so 1.5 to 2 feet of soil etc was removed.
 - **Electrical renno** - Essentially all old receptacles and light switches were replaced, a couple of hot/neutral switches were made (these arose long before I bought the house, but had been undetected), GFI breakers were installed for ungrounded and partially grounded circuits, plus a pile of other improvements were made.
- **Moving guy** - While I have moved all my stuff into several storage locations as of 25Dec2012, I must still arrange moving and storage to Calgary, where I can be closer to my aging parents, in an area which may also offer more “career” (project-like) opportunities.

For the Future - My intent is to do something challenging for my last 10 to 15 years of career. I am actually more interested in projects or business opportunities than a job, but we'll see how things go. I also need some real physical activities, since having given up marathon-distance running 5+ years ago due to Achilles tendon problems.

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