

RUNNING WITH THE BIG BOYS

In eastern Canada, and especially Québec, just about everyone has heard of Sintra Inc. The result of a 1974 merger of two long-established companies (Fabi & Fils of Sherbrooke and Modern Paving of Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil near Drummondville), Sintra is a powerhouse specializing in road construction and civil engineering projects. Unlike many other companies, they have a decentralized structure, relying on 10 regional establishments. This ensures a flexible operation suitable to each area, encourages strong personal relationships with customers, and empowers each employee to develop his/her skills to the fullest.

Sintra is also notable for another reason. It was the first North American company bought by Colas, the world's leading road construction and maintenance group. Based in France, the Colas Group works on every continent and has 1400 profit centers worldwide. Colas, by the way, is a shortened form of Cold Asphalt, a 1922 invention of the first bitumen emulsion designed specifically for road surfacing. A number of companies used the name Colas, but in 1994, all those companies, plus a number of others, were brought under the umbrella of today's Colas Group.

COMPARING NOTES

One advantage of being a member of such a large group is the ability to ask questions and seek recommendations from other members. In the case of Sintra, because they have over 30 asphalt plants, several sand pits and quarries, and 3 concrete plants, they were interested in exploring wheel loader choices. Jacques Lantin, Sintra's Equipment

Manager, checked with the Colas network. He discovered that Colas had successfully been using Kawasaki wheel loaders for many years. Barrett Paving, a sister Colas company, also gave Kawasaki a thumbs-up. He then contacted Montreal Tracteur, a dealer with whom they had already been doing business for other product lines, and who had just decided represent the Kawasaki line.



Many companies within the Colas family use Kawasaki loaders.

"I went to a Kawasaki demo event — the Sonoran Roundup — with Montreal Tracteur," says Lantin. "I ran the equipment and met the people of Kawasaki. It is very nice equipment." And so they purchased their first Kawasaki loader in April 2006.

"The decision to buy Kawasaki has worked out very well — and we shook up Cat and Komatsu in the process. We now have three Kawasaki loaders: an 80ZV, a 115ZV and a 115ZV-2. They have very good productivity and the fuel economy is great."

ON THE JOBSITE

FOCUS caught up with Sintra's 115ZV at their Drummondville Quarry. The loader and its crew migrate from place to place, depending on the need of each pit. The operators explained that at Drummondville they were quarrying rock and crushing it to different sizes ranging up to 14 mm (.5 inches) in diameter. The material is to be used for the asphalt plant located onsite — a common practice for Sintra, as it eliminates long-distance truck hauling.

"We work 5 days a week, 16 hours a day, 8-hour shifts each," says Mathieu Michaud, Engineer and Project Manager. "Depending on the weather, we might close two months out of the year. That's when major maintenance is done. Of course, we monitor all the fluid levels and make sure nothing out of the ordinary is wrong. But Montreal Tracteur takes care of the maintenance. We are happier that way."

When asked how they liked the 115ZV, both operators liked the breakout force and the joystick operation in the cab. "Personally, I prefer the Kawasaki for the fact there is no steering wheel involved," says Jonathan Allard. "Certainly the advantage is in the cab," states Eric Gagnon. "Especially since we don't have to spend the day steering around. You can sit comfortably with minimal effort to operate. That's fantastic!"

"We are very satisfied with both the dealer's and Kawasaki's support," concludes Lantin. "And we are very happy with the loaders, and look forward to getting more in the future."

Sintra Inc. is serviced by Montreal Tracteur Inc.



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– Jacques Lantin, Equipment Manager, Sintra Inc.