

Centec Electric & Controls

Success Breeds Success in Brandon

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The rising star success of Brandon-based Centec Electric & Controls is proof positive that the growth of a community's largest industries can have long and lasting ripple effects on many other facets of the business community.

Centec Electric & Controls was established in Brandon in 2000 by a trio of local electrician professionals after the company they were working for had completed large-scale projects at the then-expanding Simplot Canada (now Koch Fertilizer) plant and the multimillion-dollar construction of Brandon's Maple Leaf Fresh Foods pork processing plant. Seeing a void in the industrial electrical sector and reasoning that Brandon's large-scale industries would only continue to grow, then-co-workers Scott Johnston, Chris Johnston, and Everett Locke struck out on their own and Centec Electric & Controls was born on January 7th, 2000. In its first year of operation, Centec brought in \$1.4 million in business revenue – and the rest is history! More than 16 years later, Chris Johnston has retired from the business, though Scott Johnston still retains ownership of the company and has brought on two new partners, Bryan Bercier and Daniel Deschambault. Everett Locke has relinquished ownership but remains as a company foreman. A banner year in 2014 saw Centec pull in approximately \$23 million dollars in business revenue and saw its employee base swell to as many as 110 workers during peak projects.

Specializing in the custom design, construction, and installation of commercial and industrial controls and major electrical services, Centec Electric & Controls is not your neighbourhood electrical contracting company. Employing exclusively apprentice and journeymen electricians, Centec's project capabilities range from 5,000-volt distribution systems to 35,000 volts for terminations and everything in between. Centec provides a variety of custom services, including that of electrical contracting, control panel fabrication, utility location and installation services. Not only do they have a full service team on hand, but they also own the equipment necessary to get the work done, including backhoes, ditchwitch, telehandlers, scissor lifts, semis and trailers, reel truck trailer, and job site trailers, etc. The company's pursuit of excellence and a dissatisfaction with shelf-ready construction software, led Centec to develop its own web based software in-house. The company and clients are enjoying the efficiencies that this new software provides.

Electrical projects of significance which Centec has worked on include those at Brandon's food processing facilities, fertilizer production plants, chemical production facilities, pharmaceutical facilities, in the region's oilfield and mining sector, large-scale entertainment complexes, and a municipal water treatment plant. Over the years, Centec has serviced clients as far west as Alberta, though its core business base continues to be centred in Brandon and the surrounding area.



Quick Facts

- Established in 2000 by a trio of local electricians
- The company specializes in the custom design, construction, and installation of commercial and industrial controls and major electrical services
- Clients range from large-scale industrial and agricultural manufacturing plants to those in the oil, gas and mining sectors
- Centec is one of the largest electrical contractors in Manitoba, outside of Winnipeg.
- Centec retains between 40 and 50 full-time staff, but can employ as many as 110 skilled individuals, depending on size and scale of projects
- Centec employs exclusively apprentice and journeymen electricians, along with a core management/administration team

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Between 85 to 90 per cent of Centec's employee base is from the Brandon area. Centec provides competitive wages to a core employee count of between 45 to 50 people, a staff complement that includes skilled electricians, autoCAD staff, and nearly a dozen administrative staff to fill roles of comptrollers, document control managers, quality control managers, and certified safety officers.

However, depending on the size of project, the company's employment levels can fluctuate upward by more than 200%. For example, at peak levels during the recent pipeline expansion in southwestern Manitoba, the company employed slightly more than one hundred people. In 2014, the company paid out approximately \$8 million in payroll, while in 2015, its salaries budget was \$6-plus million. Centec also prides itself on sourcing as much of its raw inputs as possible from local markets. In addition, the company's 5,000 square-foot shop is undergoing a 2,000-square foot expansion, led by one of Brandon's foremost steel building construction companies.

That focus and drive to excel – and the desire to help others in the local economy to excel – landed Centec a Brandon Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2008-2009. In the years that have followed, the company has continued to experience steady growth and remains one of the largest electrical contractors in Manitoba outside the City of Winnipeg. Simply put, Centec has made Brandon its business and business is good!

