



**Challenges and Hurdles Overcome  
as a new Home Depot takes Shape in Toronto's North York**

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You can see the trademark orange colours on a large box building being erected at the corner of Steeles and Allness, in North York, which indicates a particular chain of home improvement stores will soon be located in that area.

Consumers in the Steeles Avenue area between Keele and Dufferin will soon have one of the largest Home Depot stores in Ontario to accommodate all their home repair and renovation needs. Home Depot was founded in 1978 in Atlanta, Georgia and has since become the world's largest home improvement retailer, operating more than 1,800 stores across North America. Home Depot currently operates in seven Canadian provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Québec and Saskatchewan), 49 U.S. states, Puerto Rico and Mexico. In Canada alone Home Depot employs over 18,000 people. The idea for the colour orange came from a consulting firm that suggested painting their signs on bright-coloured circus tent canvas because it would cost less than the conventional electric lighted signs.

When it comes to erecting these orange Home Depot stores in Ontario, the home improvement conglomerate now turns to Mady Contract Division Ltd. With offices located in Dallas, Toronto and Windsor, Mady Contract Division is a solidly established and broadly based company that for 30 years has delivered a flawless track record of investment performance in value added real estate development.



The Steeles store represents the third Home Depot that Mady has been assigned to build since it began constructing Home Depot stores in 2003. The first opened early last summer in Cambridge while their second store was completed last August in Kitchener. The grand opening of the Steeles location is set for the first of April. Meanwhile, Mady has the construction of a fourth store underway in Woodstock, and was just awarded a fifth contract to

construct one in Windsor.

"We have a great relationship with Home Depot, they are our principale client," says Len Rossetto, senior vice-president and general manager of Mady Contract Division Ltd.

Construction of the Steeles Avenue store began in September and once completed will be one of the biggest Home Depot stores in the province. The gross square footage is 107,000 plus a 124,000 sq. ft. garden centre located on the north side of the building.

"While they have plans to build Home Depot stores in the future that are as big as 160,000 square feet, this garden centre is twice as big as anything we have ever encountered," admits Rossetto.

The first phase of construction is finished. The building is now entirely enclosed, site work and the office pack is completed. The interior is well underway, including the electrical and fire protection.

To begin construction workers first had to demolish an existing structure, which offered a slight challenge to Mady representatives. Unforeseen conditions below grade meant workers encountered old case-on footings that had to be removed.

"Any time you have an existing building that you are tearing down there can be unforeseen challenges," states Rossetto. "Once the building was removed a soil consultant confirmed that the soil was worse than expected and the foundation had to be redesigned."

While this is a common challenge it meant construction of the foundation and footings was delayed two weeks and the additional work associated with this redesign delayed the project another week. "The biggest problem this brought on was that the structural steel and precast wall panel tracking was for the original schedule and we had to now accelerate the schedule," explains Rossetto. "But with increased crews and longer hours we have managed to get back on schedule."

Spencer Steel and Central Precast handled the structural steel and precast installation better than expected and Rossetto could not have been happier with the results.

A second challenge this created was making sure the site services and asphalt was completed before the seasonal shutdown at Christmas. The parking lot was vast, big enough for 436 spots but workers were able to finish the lot a week ahead of schedule.

"This is a common problem when dealing with non-virgin sites," says Rossetto. "Thanks to our excellent crews we still ended up ahead of schedule."

The main work left is the exterior landscaping which will be left until the spring.

The highlight of this particular Home Depot, which is situated on a 10-acre lot, is the garden centre which is dramatically oversized compared to other Home Depot facilities. The fencing surrounding the garden centre has also been upgraded, says Rossetto. The entire lot will be encased with decorative garden walls and while most Home Depots only have one trademark peak this one will have three.

The store is located in an area with a good mix of both residential and commercial buildings and is blended into a large retail power centre with Loblaws anchoring the other end of the site, with many retail units sandwiched in between. The intersection contains a huge volume of traffic and the store receives excellent exposure from three different elevations.

The architect for this project was John Chow of Turner, Fleischer Architects. "Their firm has been involved in all the Home Depot stores we have built," says Rossetto. "They are experts in designing and planning Home Depot facilities."

The project cost just over \$7 million for the building shell and site works and does not factor in the additional costs of opening that Home Depot takes on. Mady was able to stay within this budget and are two weeks ahead of schedule, which is very important when dealing with a large chain like Home Depot. "The date they give us for when they want to enter - the rack and stall date as they call it - is known before we even start working, as well as the grand opening date. These dates are nonnegotiable and cannot be changed," says Rossetto, matter-of-factly.

"This was a good project for us, it broke us into the Toronto market," says Rossetto, who followed the company as it moved to Toronto. "It is also a high profile project for Home Depot so we made sure we went the extra mile." "Our corporate strength is the relationships we have built with both the Home Depot representatives as well as our subcontractors, and we do everything in our power to maintain these healthy relationships," says Rossetto.