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AWG Sheds 'Lite' on Grande Prairie Library Project

Triple-pane window systems add beauty and efficiency to LEED-bound project

All-West Glass (AWG) Northern Distribution Ltd. of Prince George, British Columbia, doesn't need to read up on energy efficiency – they are the experts. In 2007, the company was asked to bid on a project that would put its expertise to good use by supplying the Grande Prairie Library with sustainable, energy efficient window systems suitable for a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Gold certified structure.

“Since they were looking for the ultimate in energy efficiency and sustainability we quoted triple-pane IG with argon gas filling, Low-e glass and Super Spacer® TriSeal,” explained John McCartney, manager, sales and distribution, for AWG Northern Distribution. “This combination represents the best system available to achieve the energy performance, long-term durability and condensation resistance necessary to earn points toward LEED certification. We were awarded the bid and began work on the project in August 2008.”

The new Grande Prairie Library in Grande Prairie, Alberta, opened in June 2009, and boasts 37,400 square-feet of space housing state-of-the-art technology and a quiet, light-filled atmosphere for book lovers to enjoy. In total, more than 10,000 square-feet of glass were specified for the project, which was led by Teeple Architects of Toronto, contractor Wright Construction of Saskatchewan and glazing contractor All-West Northern Glass of Grande Prairie. To meet the deadlines and requirements of the project, AWG enlisted PFG Glass of Langley, British Columbia, to assist with IG production.

“We partnered with PFG to complete the units because of their stellar reputation for quality and their ability to produce Super Spacer TriSeal units on an automated production line,” McCartney said. “We worked closely to ensure optimal quality of the units and timely delivery.”

PFG manufactured around 300 IG units for the project, averaging about 40 square-feet each. According to Ole Nielsen, founder and CEO of the company, some units were as large as 65 square-feet and 650 lbs.

“John McCartney visited our plant in April and thought immediately that the Grande Prairie Library project would be well suited for our automated TriSeal line,” Nielsen said. “He was right. It would have been extremely difficult to have built these units on a manual line due to their size and weight. The line had no problem with the size requirements for making the triple units.”

Nielsen continued, “The quality of the products and efficiency of the process was also up to and exceeded our expectations. All of the units were done over three shipments and were completed within the equivalent of an eight hour shift.”

The units provided by PFG were constructed with Super Spacer TriSeal, 6 mm Cardinal 272 or 6 mm clear float, Low-e and argon, with an overall thickness 50 mm – or just shy of two inches.

Additionally, AWG built 12 specialty units featuring graphic printing on the center lites of the triple-pane systems. OKALUX of Germany provided the printed glass, which adds to the aesthetic appeal and modern feeling of the library.

“The graphic units were a challenge because they required a special housing design to accommodate a 3-1/8 inch edge deletion and Cardinal Loe2 lites for the structural offset units,” McCartney said. “These systems also required special handling. For example, when the center-lite glass arrived from Germany, we learned we could not use automatic washer. Each piece needed to be hand cleaned using special static-free cloths to preserve the integrity of the graphic.”

Some units also included a dot-matrix pattern to control sun glare, and all units included argon gas, Low-e and Super Spacer TriSeal.

“We use Super Spacer on every unit we manufacture that uses argon and Low-e,” McCartney said. “We have worked with Edgetech for 15 years and are confident in its overall performance.”

‘Locally owned by northerners,’ AWG was established in 1971 with the belief that a company could have both high-quality products and outstanding customer service. AWG has grown into one of the largest and most dynamic independent automotive, residential and commercial glass companies in Canada. The company employs 300 people and has 25 retail locations across northwest Canada. A branch of the full-service glass company, AWG Northern Distribution in Prince George, produces 700 IG units per week at its 27,000 square-foot facility.

“About 30 percent of our units are for residential use and 70 percent commercial,” McCartney said. “In general, with a growing interest in LEED and energy-efficient products, we have seen an increasing number of jobs specified with Super Spacer since we began working with Edgetech in 1994. Depending on the requirements of the project, we use both Super Spacer Standard and Super Spacer TriSeal.”

McCartney also noted he is seeing a greater number of specifications that call for triple-pane IG. “It all comes down to budget versus efficiency. Our capabilities enable us to provide a variety of solutions to best meet the needs of our customers,” he said. “When customers are looking for the ultimate in energy savings, we have found that Super Spacer TriSeal applies easily in both double- and triple-pane systems.”

When asked why AWG has worked with Edgetech for so long, McCartney simply said, “We first adopted Super Spacer because it seemed like the best at the time. Throughout the years, the product has really proven itself in terms of performance and manufacturing efficiency, and Edgetech is very easy to work with.”

The Grande Prairie Library hopes to earn LEED Gold certification and AWG has a number of upcoming projects with the same aspiration. “High-performance systems are in demand and we are happy to answer the call,” McCartney concluded.

For more about AWG, visit www.all-westglass.com and more about PFG can be found at www.pfglass.com.