

will allow it to dry enough to be used to build the new roadbed. If the firm had waited until the spring to do this work, it is likely the massive earthmoving equipment would have been swallowed up by the area's mud, Nemanishen says.

The geo-textile fabric – which comes to the site in sheets the size of a football field – is used to keep mud below the good dirt, serving as the foundation for the roadbed. Nemanishen notes the fabric also makes the road stronger.

"It works on the same principle as a snowshoe," he says. "When you put a snowshoe on and step onto snow, you only sink a little. If you step on snow in only a regular shoe, you sink a lot more." Without the fabric, he says, the weight of the bulldozers, scrapers and graders would have squeezed the mud and black dirt upward, weakening the roadbed.

#### **Growing Steadily**

There has been a large increase in mining activity in Saskatchewan, Nemanishen says, which has resulted in infrastructure and residential growth. Even small towns in the region, he says, are growing

quickly. As a result, there is a significant amount of work, but also a shortage of qualified workers. "There is a boom in the development of Saskatchewan – a lot of demand for housing and the oil and resort sectors are busy. We provide a lot of training to bring some new people into our business every year, but sometimes we lose them to other industries."

Nemanishen Contracting's family-oriented operation, however, distinguishes it in the marketplace. The company attracts people from the oil patches – including people who have worked with Nemanishen before – because they have families and enjoy having their weekends off. Nemanishen says this is important in his business.

"We work hard to maintain a family atmosphere," he says. "We work long, hard hours, but it is important that our employees have a break and get to spend time with their families. We want to keep our people happy. We offer competitive wages and have a retirement savings plan in place. It is important that we bring new things in to help stabilize our business and keep our people with us."

Part of that, he notes, is not overextend-

ing the company's work force. Scheduling can be tough in Saskatchewan because of rapid changes in the weather; heavy rains in the spring can stop a job for a long time, he says. Nemanishen Contracting does what it can to make up lost time, without pushing its people too hard.

"We try not to take on too much and run ourselves thin," Nemanishen says. "This is important in keeping our people and ensuring slow and steady growth. We don't believe in fast growth – every year we buy one or two new machines and take on the amount of work we can handle. We don't want to put our toes over the line and get them cut off."

He explains the company will easily expand because of the growth in Saskatchewan, but Nemanishen Contracting will continue gaining repeat clients because of its approach to the business.

"We pride ourselves on having a high level of customer satisfaction," Nemanishen says. "We treat our people and customers fairly. We constantly talk and discuss things with our clients to ensure we do what they want and remain happy with our work." ■