

CASE CX350D Excavator Provides Speed, Fuel Efficiency and Power for Family-Owned Business in Ontario

Gagne Excavation, a family-owned business in Casselman, Ontario, recently purchased the first CASE CX350D excavator in Canada.

By John Bauer, brand marketing manager, CASE Construction Equipment

Claude Gagne, founder of Gagne Excavation, purchased his first CASE backhoe in 1959, and the business has been thriving ever since. Offering a broad range of services, Gagne Excavation has developed relationships with their customers that have lasted for generations. Now operated by his son Marc Gagne and his grandsons, Yannick and Jonathan, the company works on a variety of projects in and around the farmland and municipality of Casselman, Ontario.

“We do snow removal, excavation, septic beds, sewer work, land clearing for farmers, ditch cleaning. We do excavation for barns, houses, almost anything,” explains Yannick Gagne, one of Marc’s sons, and the third generation of the Gagne family involved in the business.

With the goal of expanding their utility and excavation work, and adding mass excavation power to their three sand and gravel pits, the company added a [CX350D excavator](#) to their fleet during the summer of 2015. To date, the machine has helped them be faster and more productive in their work – all while keeping operating costs at a level comparable to their older, considerably smaller excavator.

A Proud Legacy

“My grandfather started in 1959. He started with some cows and he bought a backhoe tractor to start doing excavation for houses and barns. He bought a dozer to move some manure piles and do some excavation. He built the school [in Casselman]. Then, through the years, my uncle got the farm and my dad continued the excavation company.”

In addition to snow removal, sewer work, land clearing and excavation, Gagne Excavation also operates three sand pits—approximately 150 acres total—in the Casselman area. “We’ve got two over here and one in Lemieux. We take out sand for septic beds, we’ve got some fill, some topsoil. We also screen some sand for the township to put in the road during wintertime.”

With as much work as they do, it may come as a surprise to some that Gagne Excavation operates with a lean staff. “Right now we’re around seven guys. In the winter we’re more. We double the guys in the winter,” explains Marc Gagne.

“We’ve got four loaders, two backhoe tractors, a truck, snow blowers, a truck with a plow on the road—we do all the roads in Casselman, all the schools—everything in Casselman. We have some clients in St. Albert too.”

The Right Equipment for the Job

J.R. Brisson Equipment has been supplying construction equipment and farm implements in Ontario for over 111 years. It was there that Claude Gagne purchased his first CASE machine in 1959, and much of the company's equipment is still provided by J.R. Brisson. "My father bought his first dozer from Ernest Brisson. Almost all of our machines come from there," says Marc Gagne.

The company still retains the first payoff letter and customer loyalty card provided by CASE in 1961.

In the summer of 2015, Gagne and Sons purchased the first CASE CX350D excavator in Canada. "Gagne Excavating has been our customer for the past, I'm guessing, sixty years," explains Jonathan Trepanier, sales rep for J.R. Brisson Equipment in Vars, Ontario. "They've had multiple pieces of CASE equipment throughout the years, and recently, we got them to try the CX350D."

"They tried it, I gave them a couple of days to demo it and they wanted to keep it for another month so they turned that into a rental. I think they mainly wanted to see how much productivity they were going to gain with the bigger machine without increasing the amount of people working for them. I think by juggling the number they figured out that it was a very good investment for them to trade the 240 in for the CX350D. They already had the equipment to move it around and the operator was quite excited to go for a bigger machine."

Putting the CX350D to Work

Initially, Gagne and Sons needed a more powerful excavator for working on larger sewer line and septic pit jobs in the area, but they began to test its capabilities in the sand pits where sand is extracted from a pond. The excavator sits on a bench next to the water and digs down to about 20-feet below the water (the company is permitted to dig down 40 feet).

As an operator, Yannick Gagne noticed several things right away.

"The comfort, the smoothness, the fuel economy, and the power. They changed the seat for sure because the comfort is better than the old one. It's got an air seat in it. When you sit twelve hours a day in the cab, you need a good seat. This seat is almost like sitting on your couch at home. It's so comfortable. The heated seat during the wintertime is a good feature too."

In addition to the ergonomic improvements, Gagne and Sons are also impressed with the speed and smoothness of operation in the sand pits. The CX350D features cycle times up to 8 percent faster compared to the previous model.

“I'll say it's twice as fast [as the 240]. At the end of the day, you can see the pile that you took out of the water. I'm pretty sure if you start in the morning and look at noon, you're going to be pretty close to what we were doing in a [whole] day before [with the previous machine].”

The faster cycle times are the result of a new, electronically controlled pump, a larger control valve and multiple sensors. These features combine with the CASE Intelligent Hydraulic System and its four integrated control systems to make the best use of the machine's hydraulic power and momentum, resulting in added speed, strength and fuel efficiency.

“Out of all the excavators that we've dug sand out of the water with, this is the strongest one that we've got. When you curl the bucket and start swinging it's not slowing down. It's way better than the other one.”

“We've got another excavator and when you start digging, it's always doing a little dip. With the CASE you can start pulling some grade and never stop and it's never going to give you a little jerk. I can scrape the stockpile out of the grass and not even take the grass out.”

Fuel Efficiency = More Production Without Raising Costs

One of the most important improvements to the new excavator is the noteworthy gains in fuel efficiency. While they've gone from a 24-metric-ton machine up to a 35-metric-ton machine, Gagne Excavation notes that they've noticed no increase in total fuel use – counterintuitive, considering they're moving so much more earth.

“We're doing more work with the same fuel the 240 did in a day. Probably didn't change the fuel bill at all, and the excavator is bigger and more powerful,” Yannick explains. “The operating cost is important because you've got to compete with the other guys. You cannot sell your sand for \$10 more because you used \$10 more worth of fuel so you need to stay competitive and, with saving fuel, that's a good way to start.”

ProCare Provides Confidence

All CASE D-Series excavators come with CASE ProCare; a suite of product assurances that includes a three-year Advanced CASE SiteWatch™ telematics subscription, a three-year/3,000-hour full-machine factory warranty, and a three-year/3,000-hour planned maintenance contract.

“ProCare is important to us because for three years, 3,000 hours, you don't have to worry about changing the oil, changing the fuel filters, doing any maintenance. You just have to put the fuel in the machine and work and do the payments so you don't have any extra cost of changing the oil or any breakdown should be all covered by warranty so you don't have to worry about extra cost.”

The inclusion of the CASE SiteWatch telematics also gives the local dealer visibility into the health and performance of the machine, allowing them to be more proactive in providing service and assisting Gagne Excavation in keeping equipment running at optimal uptime.

“If we’ve got an employee on it we can check, make sure he's not overheating it or, J.R. Brisson can know if we need an oil change or if it needs service. If it has a problem, then you just call them and they know right away what it is because they have all the information on their computer.”

When working on tough applications, it’s reassuring to know that your equipment is being properly looked after. “Taking sand out of the water is hard on everything-- pins, bushings—you have to grease a lot. We did it for 9,000 hours on the other machine and it was running pretty good when we traded it in. If this one is as good, we're not going to have any problems.”

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