

GROWING PAIN | WATER

It's tough to keep both your lawn and your lifestyle green. In fact, about 30 to 60 per cent of the water poured onto municipal, manicured landscapes by consumers is of no benefit because of improper and ill-timed application.

ExactET Systems Inc. launched in late 2005. Its business plan? To give urban landowners a strategic approach to dealing with water waste by correlating intricate, real-time weather data with precise irrigation cycles.

"The science behind this is one that it also creates a healthier landscape because it drives the [grass] roots further south, and it does that by managed allowable depletion," explains Graham Duffy, the company's co-founder (along with water conservationist Darren Kovacs).

The science in discussion is called evapotranspiration — a combined measure of water lost to the atmosphere through evaporation and water used by plant tissues. Shortly after launching, ExactET set up its first specialized weather station in Calgary (they now maintain four), then installed about 60 automated irrigation systems around the city, each regulated by evapotranspiration data to ensure soil moisture balance. To pluck their most dramatic example of success so far: after signing on last May, Southcentre Mall's water usage fell by more than

"We're probably the most knowledgeable on smart weather-based irrigation in Canada."

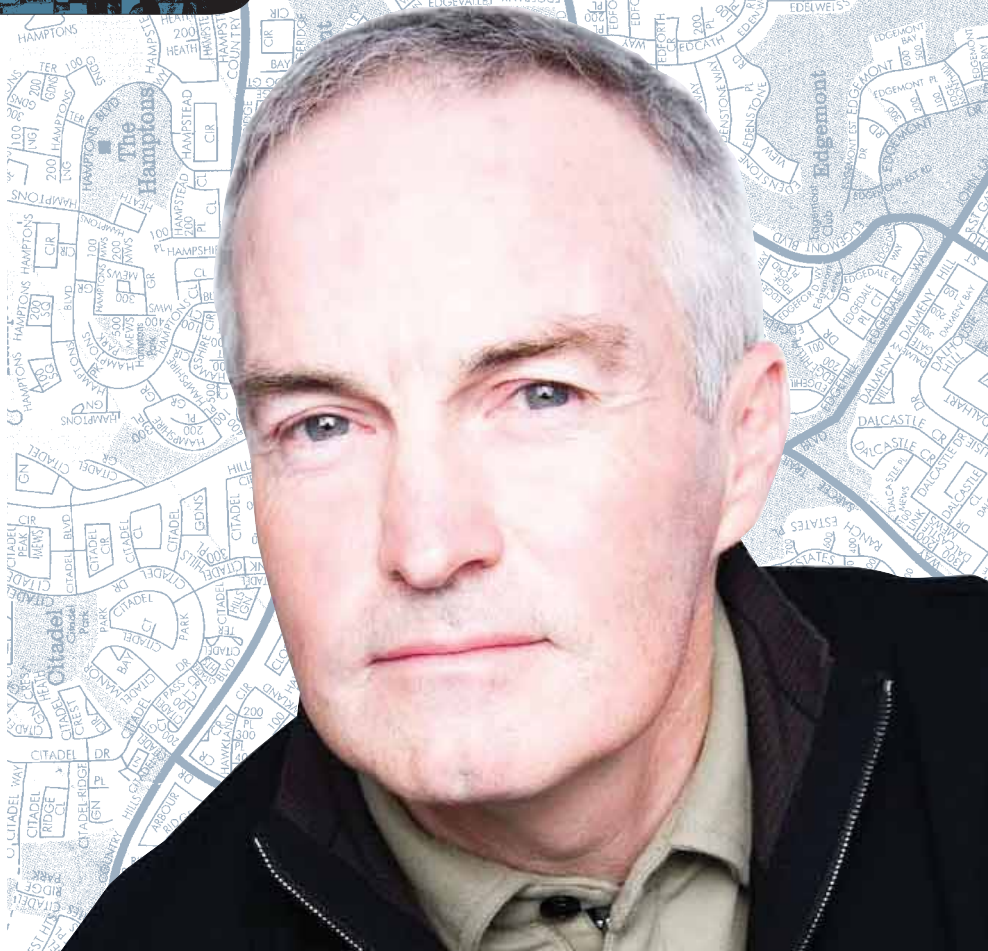
a million gallons (or 43 percent) during 2006, saving more than \$5,000 in water costs. "The payback for [commercial customers] on these types of systems is sometimes less than a year, so it's an easy business decision," Duffy says.

His last gig was as president of Forzani Interactive (the e-commerce arm of the sports retailing giant), and the Aussie ex-pat previously helped launch Canadian new media pioneer Canoe.ca, serving as CEO. Combining his expertise with Kovacs' was a way to give back to the community, especially given how essential water conservation has become in the Prairies.

"We're probably the most knowledgeable on smart weather-based irrigation in Canada," says Duffy, adding: "In fact, I know we are."

ExactET is in Toronto and Vancouver, and will expand to Ottawa, Montreal, London, Ontario, Windsor, Edmonton and Kamloops in 2007.

— Eric Rumble



Graham Duffy

FAST FACTS

Title: Co-founder, ExactET Systems Inc.

Age: 50.

Education: A business degree from the University of Technology Sydney, in Australia.

If you could live in any city, where would it be, and why? I've always grown up around the water, and in Sydney, the pace of life, the lifestyle down there, the climate, everything, I mean, it's home. The other one I enjoyed very much is San Diego: the climate, the pace of life, the opportunity and again, it's also by the water.

What does Calgary need more than anything today? A little more diversity, [because] oil and gas still runs the show. More diversity, I think, in a whole bunch of areas, whether it be in culture or business.

If you could start any business in the city, what

would it be? The one I've started now.

Where do you go in the city to think? I usually go to the mountains. I love going out to Kananaskis. It's a way of recharging the batteries and really gives you time to think.

What's your favourite part of the city? Probably along the river. The Bow is just so beautiful. Other than that, I live out on the west side and just looking out at the mountains is pretty spectacular. It's just awe-inspiring, even now being here 20-odd years.

What's your least favourite? Some of the areas where it's a hodgepodge, and industrial, and it's a whole bunch of old wrecks and cars.