

Stonewall inventor patents new idea for deck levelling

By Evan Matthews

When the ground shifts decks often become uneven, but no longer, according to a Stonewall inventor.

Rey Laferriere, 59, is the owner of PGT Global, and said his company has patented the design for a concept he has labeled Top Deck Levelers.

"Originally, I made a few different prototypes, and I hired someone in Ottawa to do my patents on those designs. We had a big discussion, and when we wrote the patents, we decided not to patent the individual product, but rather the concept," said Laferriere.

"We're focusing on and sticking with the main design right now, but I've got seven or eight different designs, but they're all the same concept. It can be used in so many different applications," he said, adding he's also working on a design that could be applied to the beams of a house.

Top Deck Levelers functionality is very simple, according to Laferriere: A flat steel "pressure plate" is secured to the top of the support post, and the load plate is secured to the support beam (underneath) and a threaded lifting bolt extends through the center of the beam towards the top of the deck. The opposite end of the threaded adjuster is designed to lock into the pressure plate mounted on the post (prevents any kind of kick out).

A hole is then cut through the top of the deck surface using a hole saw, which provides the user with full access to the levelling bolt. Then the hole is sealed with a supplied weatherproof cap.

As shifting happens, the user can remove the weatherproof cap for access to the threaded lifting bolt, and with a ratchet, can be adjusted to level the deck in the future.

Keeping the manufacturing local was a priority, and Laferriere said he quickly decided to contract Intec Steelworx—a Teulon-based company—to produce the metal pieces.

After sitting down with them, Laferriere said he learned Intec Steelworx has "state-of-the-art" laser cutting done with a CNC plasma cutter. Despite looking into outsourcing, he said factoring in proximity and quality control, keeping manufacturing local was an easy choice.

"Also factoring in the design and the product's weight—and believe me, I looked at all the options—shipping costs were high; that and I felt really strongly about having something made right here in Canada, and Manitoba," said Laferriere.

"Intec looks after everything for me, and when they call me, it's ready to



Level any deck from the top with the simple turn of a ratchet.

go. It's really convenient, and takes the guess work out. I don't have to do anything," he said.

Originally coming from a 30-year career in printing, Laferriere said he retired four years ago. While working in the industry, he said working on and maintaining large machinery and leveling heavy equipment was a large part of his job.

But once he retired, Laferriere said woodworking became his hobby, and building decks. He developed the idea for Top Deck Levelers while working on his son's deck in Golden, British Columbia, and because the property is on the side of a mountain, leveling the deck was a challenge.

"Once we did all the framework and everything, looking at it, we realized you would not be able to get underneath that deck once it was built. In the future, he'd have to level it eventually... We live in a world where the earth is shifting all the time," said Laferriere.

"I came up with the concept, looking at different leveling options, and this one just made sense. You'll never have to go underneath the deck and get dirty again," he said.

Though home owners can contact Laferriere if interested in the product, he said with a patent in place, his plan is to approach commercial businesses—big contractors and home building companies—to get his product circulating. Retail will come later, he said.

Once established in the North American market, Laferriere said he would like to license out the concept privately, so Top Deck Levelers can be manufactured and sold in local retail stores.

"I'd like to move on to other things... Then I'd be more involved with royalties and less involved with large scale production and sales, someone else would be doing that with my license," said Laferriere.

"Retail is a totally different entity, and I'd rather leave that to companies



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Rey Laferriere holds his patented Top Deck Leveler.

already doing that," he said.

Though a website is not yet operational, Laferriere said he has purchased a URL and is in the process of website design. The site is "soon-to-

be" launched.

For more information on PGT Global, or to order a Top Deck Leveler, call Laferriere at 204-781-5170 or email at reylaferriere@gmail.com.

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