



“Kids These Days” – Navigating the Multi-Generational Workplace To Embrace Change and Build Stronger

Kevin French – Baby Boomer ✨

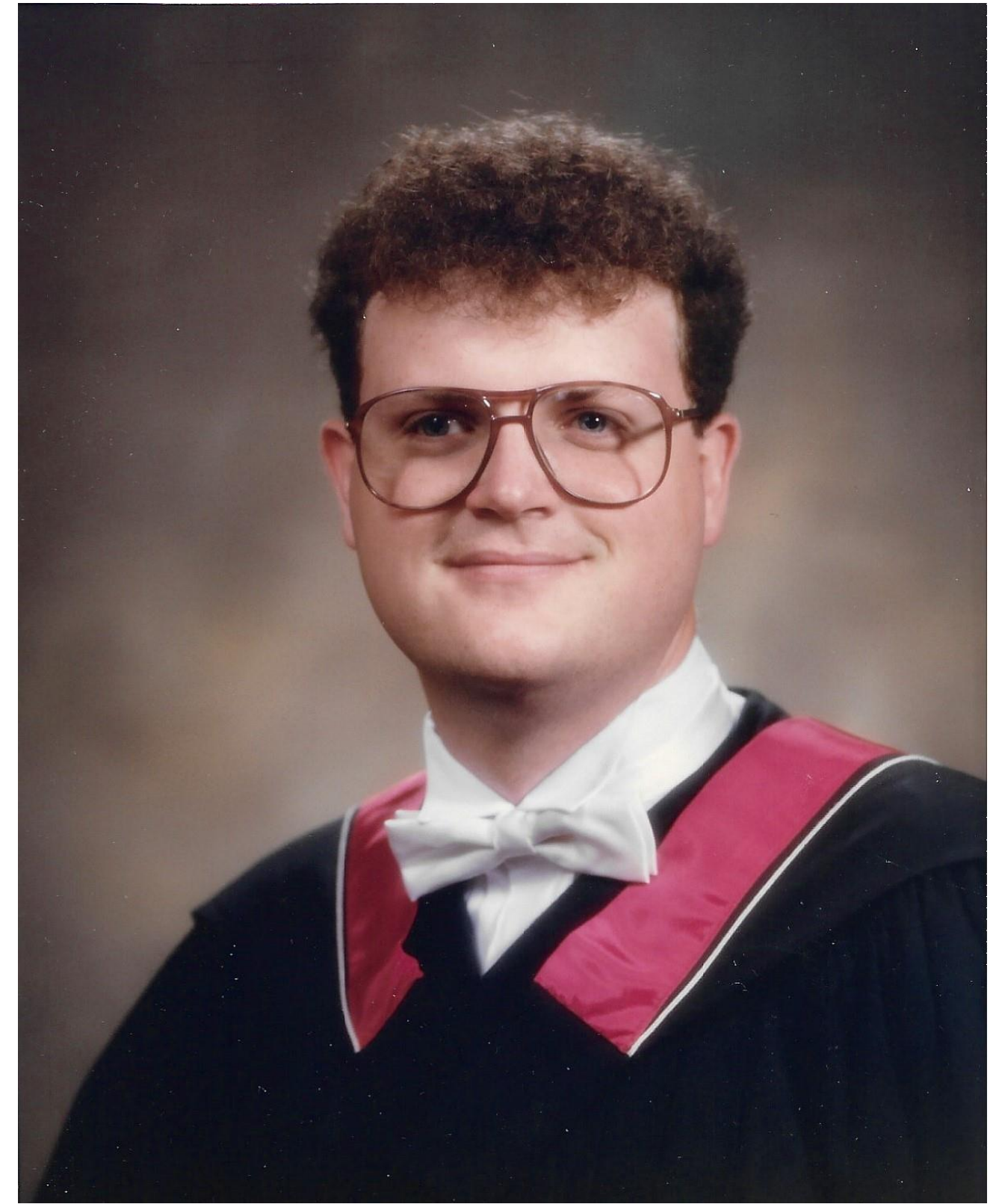
**REMEDIATION &
RISK MANAGEMENT**

**DEWATERING &
WATER TREATMENT**

ESAA RemTech 2025 – Banff, AB
October 15, 2025

About me:

- Born in Toronto in 1963 – right at the tail end of the Baby Boomer generation
- Graduated B.A.Sc. from University of Waterloo in Civil / Environmental engineering in 1988
- No debt thanks to cheaper tuition and a combination of parental support & co-op work term income



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About me:

- 1988: 3-bedroom apartment with U/G parking at Bathurst & Steeles in Toronto for \$900 per month rent (~\$2,043 today)
- Drove a 1987 Plymouth Reliant K car costing ~\$12,000 new (~\$27,240 today)
- 1990: Bought first house (detached, 3-bedroom) in Waterloo for \$145,000 (~\$329,150 today)
- But – interest rate was 14.25%!



“A nice reliant automobile”



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Started working full-time in 1988:

- Job offer for full-time salaried position before graduation
- Dillon Consulting, Toronto, \$30,000 salary (\$68,100 today)
- Standard was 40 hr work week
- Land line telephones, physical catalogue style telephone books, film cameras, fax machines, reference books (physical ones), paper maps,



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Started working full-time in 1988:

- Drafting by hand, typing pools working off literal “cut and paste” reports, maybe had a PC with floppy disc drives (if you were lucky), etc.
- No internet, email, cell phones, social media, AI (except in science fiction!)



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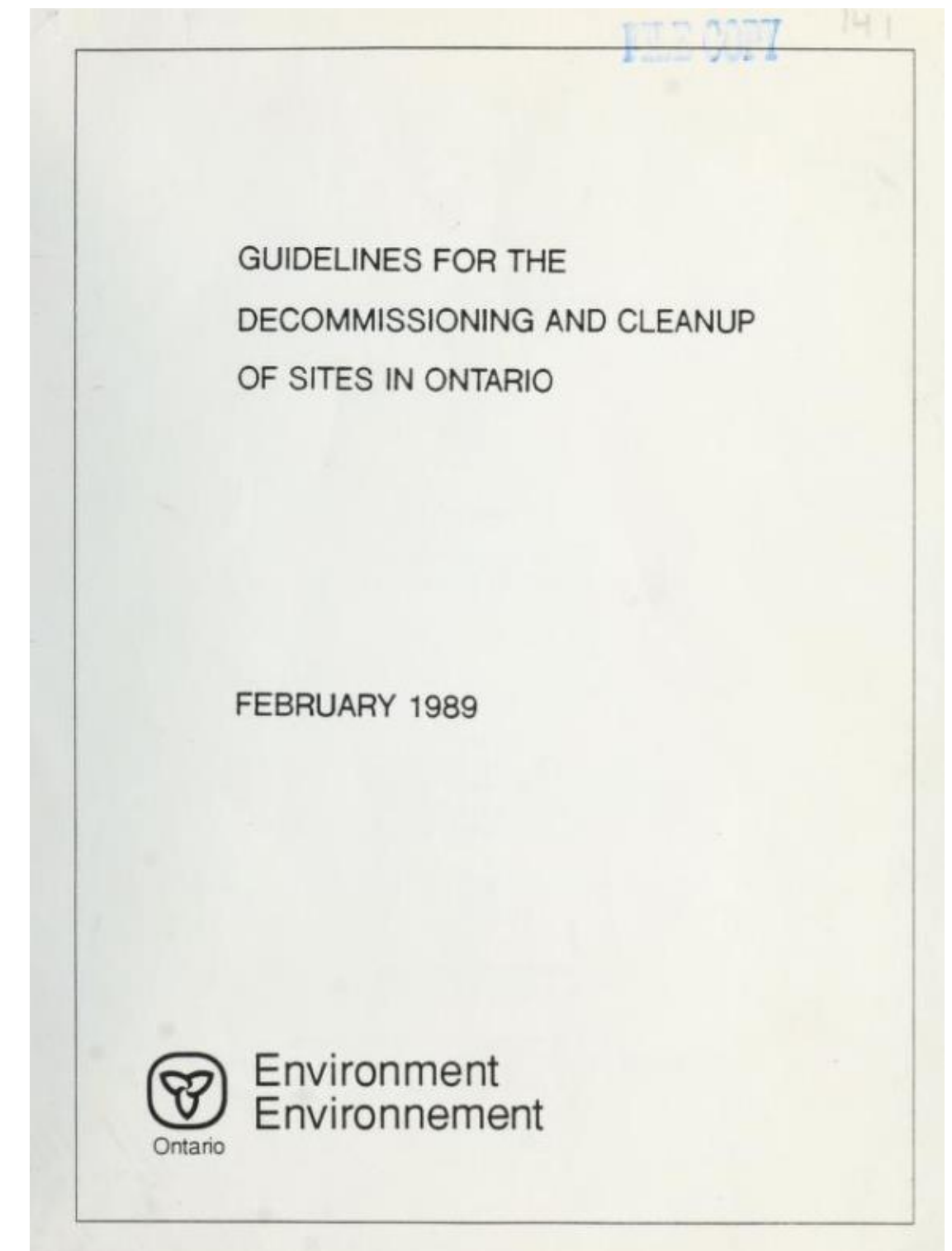
Started working full-time in 1988:

- Smoking was legal (and acceptable) in the workplace (as well as restaurants and everywhere else)!
- HR was pretty limited and focused on physical and sexual abuse (not even harassment), alcohol / drug use, hiring and firing, salary bands, vacation and benefits, etc.
- No discussions about DEI, mental health, right to disconnect, parental / compassionate / caregiver leave, personal days, etc.



The actual work:

- There were no standardized or prescriptive regulations regarding acceptable soil and groundwater quality
 - A handful of guidelines and reference documents
 - No such thing as risk assessment or risk management
 - Site remediation was limited to “dig and dump” for soil and “pump and treat” for groundwater
- Field work was expected and accepted for the first 2 to 4 or 5 years of your career, paired with a more senior mentor for formal training
 - Critical knowledge transfer and application



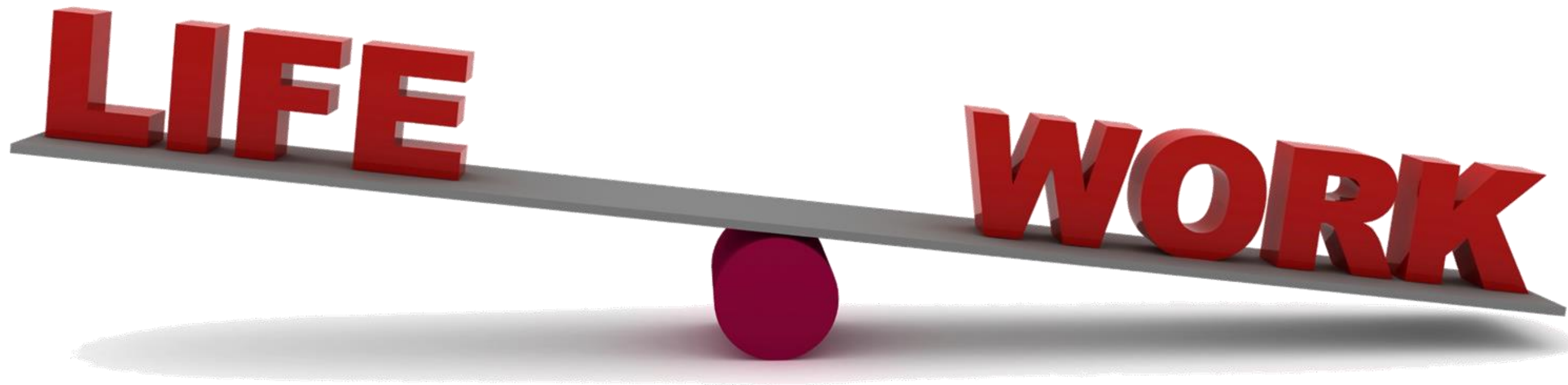
The actual work:

- People generally did not become PMs until after that time
- No one with less than 10 years' experience was called a "Senior" anything
- There was more emphasis on intentional cross-training:
 - Phase I and II ESAs, site inspections, drilling & sampling, UST pulls, remedial excavations, hydrogeological investigations (pump tests), landfill monitoring, designated substance surveys, reporting, historical research at the reference library, wrote computer programs, etc.
- The expectation was that hard work would be rewarded through monetary compensation and promotion



The actual work:

- Led to an inequality in work-life balance
- You generally had to pick work first if you wanted to be successful



Leadership then:

- Lucky if you got paired with or picked by a good mentor
- Leadership was hierarchical and bureaucratic, sometimes dictatorial
- Feedback was infrequent; mainly annual reviews
- No transparency on salary – generally wasn't spoken of amongst peers – there were no external, objective benchmarks to reference (salary surveys, Glassdoor)
- Many taboo subjects: mental health, relationship problems, gender identity, and “feelings” in general
- Expected to “suck it up” and “get on with it”

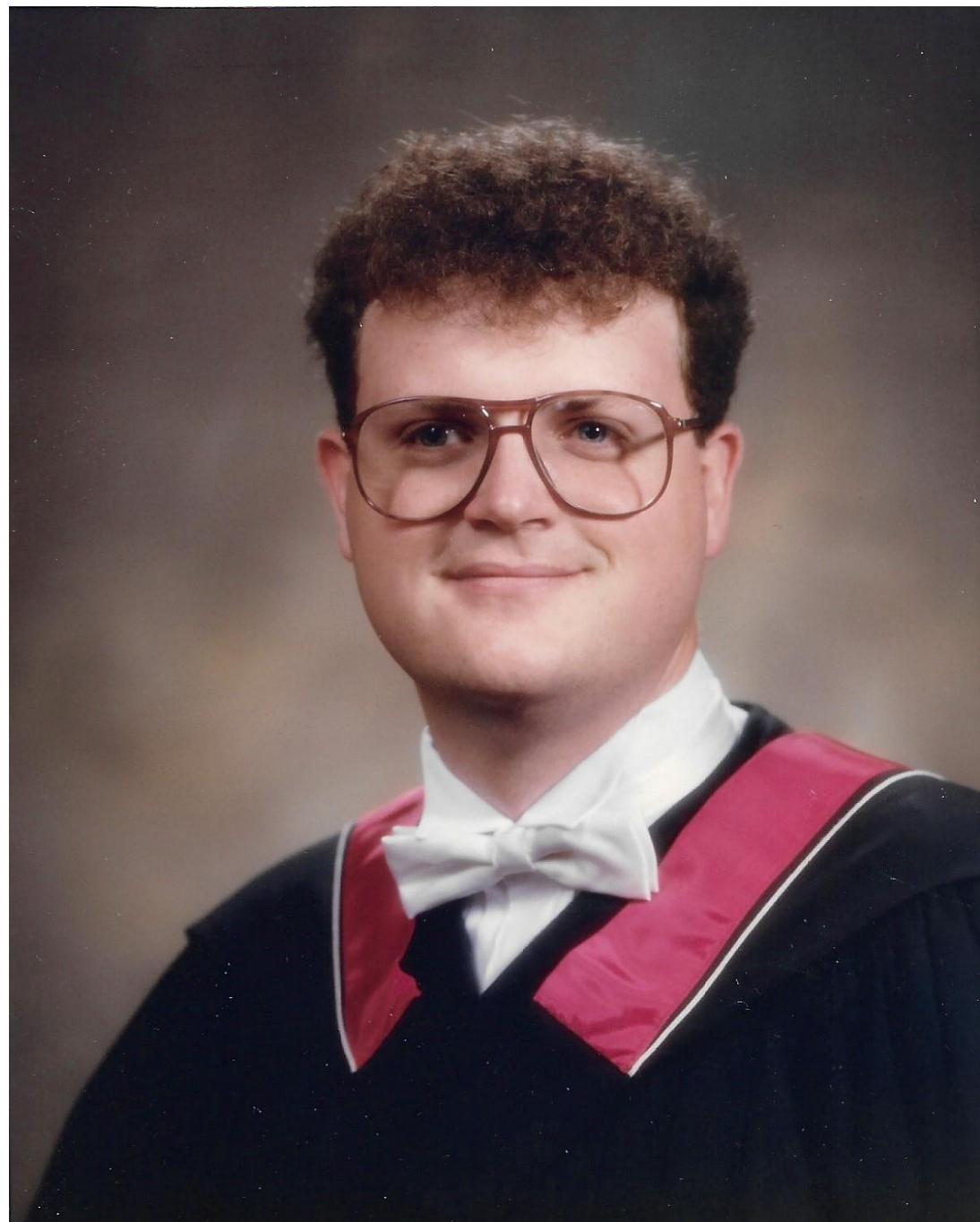
**Keep your
head down,
work hard,
& you will be
recognized.**



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**DEWATERING &
WATER TREATMENT**

Times have changed...for the better!



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