

Company Spotlight: Room To Go

By Rachel Johnson, PSAI Director of Marketing

There are plenty of portable restroom companies that share a similar backstory – often involving a father making a go in the industry before eventually passing the company down to his son(s) or daughter(s). Room To Go in Millgrove, Ontario does seem to fit this mold at first glance, as Harold Ross did start the company in 1991 before eventually passing the reigns to his daughter, Keri Ross Madden. However, Keri explained how they actually “have a different background than most in this industry,” as they came from the RV industry. In addition to RVs, they “also had a fleet of office trailers including 12 washcars (restroom trailers requiring city connections) back in the 70’s and 80’s.” They had their own small factory where they manufactured these units, both for sale and for their own fleet. In 1991, Harold Ross downsized and set out “as a one man show with the intention of selling restrooms he was building in his garage.” With his own units and “about a dozen Nu Concepts restroom [trailers],” he made the “easy transition from the trailer rental industry to get into renting portable restroom facilities.”



Keri shared that “in the early years [they] didn’t even own a vacuum truck, but rather subcontracted out all pumping.” She believes that this may be why they have such strong ties to, and relationships with, so many portable toilet suppliers. Keri attributes Room To Go’s early success to the film industry taking off in Toronto, offering plenty of rental opportunities. They also “developed a heated, self-contained washroom” that complied with Ontario legislation stating every construction site had to have heated washrooms with warm water wash up facilities. As business boomed, Harold couldn’t keep up on his own, so he “added a helper.” Chris Montgomery joined Room To Go in 1996 and is still with the team today. Keri moved back to Ontario in 1999 and joined the company in 2000, “doing a little bit of everything from office work to delivering and cleaning toilets and trailers, to building and repairing them.” In 2002 they added their fourth employee, “Brett House, as a part time summer employee to help out with events. He had just finished his first year at University and came back each summer... he, too, is still with [the company].”

Since then, Room To Go has added more employees “including office staff and 3 drivers.” Harold recently retired, and Keri took over with Chris and Brett as equal partners in the business. “We have gone from a time in the early 90’s where no one had ever seen a restroom trailer and [people] were simply amazed at the Nu Concepts, to where we are today with a fleet of luxury trailers to satisfy even the pickiest of customers,” Keri shared.

Currently, Room To Go deals “mainly in restroom trailers and heated single washrooms, servicing special events – but monthly rentals do make up more than half of [their] business.” As she put it, “we are a small tight-knit crew, there are only 9 of us on staff and we tend to cater to a higher end customer. We still manufacture our Executive Single restrooms; most of which we keep for our own rental fleet, but we do sell some outside of our immediate rental area.”

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When asked to share some of the most memorable events they've serviced, Keri said how "servicing the film industry" has offered the "opportunity to 'brush with fame' on many occasions." However, some of the most impressive jobs they have worked on were for 'The Royals.' "Most recently we provided a private restroom for Prince Harry when he was in Toronto for the Invictus Games last summer," Keri shared. "A few years back we supplied a restroom trailer for Prince Charles and Camilla's visit to Niagara." In addition to royalty, they "supplied [their] Executive Single washrooms; two, one for Bill Clinton and one for John Travolta when they were in Toronto for a speaking event," which they brought "inside The Westin Harbour Castle Hotel downtown Toronto so that they would not have to leave a secured area to use the restroom." When they aren't supplying restroom options for the rich and famous, their memorable experiences are much more simple, like the pipeline job they've been servicing. "Our driver Mark is on a first name basis with all the crew," Keri said, "and they invite him to sit down and join them for a BBQ lunch when he arrives."

Keri also shared her view on the PSAI and the industry in general. "I think one of the most surprising things about this industry is that it is not the 'dirty job' many perceive it to be," she said. "We have nice new trucks and equipment that we keep clean, our drivers are clean and presentable, and go home clean each night. We have met the most amazing people in this industry, a lot of hard working small business people who care and help each other out; it truly is a great community."

Luckily, the PSAI had the opportunity to welcome Keri into *our* community. "We were Members back 15 years ago or so, and I remember attending the PSAI Convention, but I didn't know anyone and didn't really know what was going on so I missed out on most of it," she explained. "This time around, I have gotten involved; I am on a few committees and have met so many more people and we are getting much more out of it."

She stated how it's the people that have made her second experience as a PSAI Member so enjoyable. "What I like most about being a PSAI Member are all the amazing people I have met, and particularly so many great women in the industry. It has been great to "talk shop" with some of the ladies because it was largely a 'boy's club' 18 years ago when I started into this industry." To clarify, Keri continued by saying, "don't get me wrong; the guys have been great too. Everyone is very friendly and willing to help out. I have made so many new friends and connections since rejoining PSAI a few years ago."

We are glad to hear that Room To Go's return to the PSAI has been beneficial and that they are reaping the benefits of our Association. If you know of another great PSAI Member company that our membership should know more about – or if you'd like to share how the PSAI has positively impacted your company – reach out to Rachel at rachelj@psai.org. We'd love to hear from you!

