

Reviving The Past, Building for the Future



ROBERT ROTH – The Ontario Construction Report Special Report

“It’s all about relationships.”

So says Larry Maher, owner and president of Maher Construction Inc., in explaining his company’s rise in less than a decade to become one of the most trusted renovation firms in the Metro Toronto area.

Nothing underscores the confidence people place in Maher Construction more than its most current endeavor – restoration of the five-storey, 35,000 square-foot historic Gladstone Hotel.

The hotel, located at 1214 Queen St. W., is one of Toronto’s most significant historic sites. Constructed in 1889 and designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, the 52-room facility is the oldest continuously operating hotel in Toronto. The building is a classic example of Richardsonian Romanesque-style architecture, complete with plaster moldings and grand hallways.

“There is a lot of careful work that has to be done in such renovations,” said the hotel’s development manager, Christina Zeidler. So, when she went looking for both care and competence in renovation work, she called on Maher Construction.

“We are a service-based industry, so we were looking for a renovation company that was service-based. I was very happy to be working with Maher.”

That commitment to service, to “relationships,” is precisely the foundation on

which the Maher reputation has been erected.

“Most of our business is repeat and most of our business is referrals,” Larry pointed out.

Although Maher Construction will do design-builds from scratch, the company tends to concentrate on building renovations – a specialty in itself, Larry emphasized.

“A lot of companies won’t tackle major interior renovation or restoration projects. Because we do so much interior work, clients are very confident in our abilities. It’s second nature to us. We are aware of the unique difficulties that arise in these types of projects, unlike contractors who focus on the new construction projects.”

The Gladstone project, initiated in July 2004 and scheduled for completion by December of this year, represents a complete makeover for the hotel, including reconstruction of the building facade, guest suites and ground floor bars.

“We’re doing the electrical, mechanical, windows, doors, roofing – you name it,” Larry said.

Particularly noteworthy is restoration of the old Otis elevator, believed to be the oldest hand-operated elevator still in use in Ontario, if not Canada. The elevator has now been freed from its concrete encase-

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Maher Group

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ment and is exposed for public view by a glass enclosure.

"The Gladstone has been a great project. It's been such an amazing experience to be a part of the history of this landmark hotel," Larry said.

The company has also been involved in several other high-profile renovations in the Toronto area, including the 5,000-square-foot Scotia McLeod mid-town Toronto branch offices at the Yonge Eglinton Centre. "We constructed several new offices," Larry explained, "which included new mill-work, electrical and mechanical."

The company has also built a sterling reputation with the Brick Corporation. That relationship started with construction of the 42,000-square-foot Brick building in Whitby in 2003-2004.

"We constructed the shell for the developer and since then we have been asked to do renovation work in a number of the Brick's other buildings," Larry explained. That relationship has taken them to



Brick and United Furniture warehouse stores throughout the Metro Toronto area, including Etobicoke, Scarborough and Mississauga and Ottawa.

Some of Maher's projects have been substantial, reaching upwards of \$6 million. But, large or small, Maher Construction puts the same level of care and expertise into every renovation.

"We will do anything from 1,000 square feet to 100,000 square feet. It's not just about getting the big jobs. You can make a good living doing the smaller jobs if you're efficient."

Maher recently tackled 15,000 square feet with the

United Furniture Warehouse building in Etobicoke, 25,000 square feet with the ASP Maxcess Flooring building in Oakville, 10,000 square feet with the React Consumer Response building in Brampton and 4,500 square feet with the Union Gas offices at the Yonge Eglinton Centre.

The company is also proud of its work with Save The Children Canada. Maher completed Phase 1 of the agency's office expansion in 2003 and completed Phase 2 over the summer of 2005, for a total of approximately 8,000 square feet.

"We are committed to

working within the budget, ensuring that all projects are completed as per scope and schedule and delivering

the highest quality of work and service to our clients."

Maher's excellent reputation with subcontractors is also a factor in being able to deliver quality work on time and on budget. Working closely with contractors and paying them on time ensures a happy, dedicated workforce, Larry explained.

"It's all about trust," Larry pointed out. "Our long-term relationships with our sub-trade contractors, consultants and employees is a major factor in our continued success."

Though he earned a degree in psychology from York University, Larry has spent his entire life in the construction industry. "I've never had a job outside the construction field." He

knows that trust is the cornerstone on which lasting relationships are built. Larry also knows that relationships are easier to build when the boss is accessible and "hands-on." That's why his door is always open to both clients and subcontractors.

"I give each project my personal attention," Larry said. "People like that."

And if there's an issue that needs resolving, clients can go right to the top—right away.

"They have my cell phone and they know how to get a hold of me."

If you'd like to know more about the Maher Group, visit their Web site at <http://www.maherconstructioninc.com>.

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