



Lowe Mechanical

30 years of providing solutions to refrigeration and HVAC challenges

Before dawn on May 17, 2004 the satellite communications centre at Assiniboia Downs racetrack in Winnipeg caught fire. Two things soon became known about this fire—it had started at about 3:30 a.m., and damage was estimated to be in excess of \$1 million. Cleanup and renovation would require at least six months, track managers feared, meaning the loss of an entire summer and fall racing season.

The day of the fire, Russ Passey, director of property services for the Downs, called Lowe Mechanical Services Ltd. for help. “Lowe went beyond the call of duty,” says Passey. “They were here when we needed them.”

With Lowe crews working almost around the clock, “we had their operation up and running in just 12 days,” says John Warnica, general manager of Lowe Mechanical Services, a Winnipeg refrigeration, air quality, energy management, radiant heat and HVAC specialist.

“When I came into my job at the Downs, I was a bit skeptical of Lowe. I’d been used to dealing with another

supplier,” says Passey. “They had to go that extra mile to win me over. Lowe’s dedication was remarkable after the fire. It always has been, on all their work for us. Right now, they’re helping us find energy-management solutions, in conjunction with Manitoba Hydro.”

That initiative, Warnica adds, is expected to reduce Assiniboia Downs’ energy use by as much as 30 per cent, resulting in significant savings.

Lowe Mechanical Services Ltd. celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. After he lost his job back in 1977, Murray Lowe went into business for himself, servicing residential customers while his wife, Jan, did the bookkeeping from a home office. The following year the couple was doing so well, they were able to acquire the company that had laid off Murray.

As the company grew, the focus shifted from residential to commercial HVAC. Today, their product and service list includes project management, preventive maintenance, humidification, heat reclamation, gas fitting, energy management, computer room systems, refrigeration

and grocery store design, walk-in coolers and freezers, compressors and coils and CFC management.

“We’ve been able to grow the business by providing excellent service. We still have many of our original customers,” says Warnica. Those customers’ facilities are located throughout Manitoba, in every province and territory with the exception of the Maritimes and “as far north as there is civilization in Canada. We have done installations in every community with a winter road or that you can fly-in or barge-in equipment and crews. And we service all this equipment, sending our mechanics on Northern runs year-round.

“We’re committed to our customers and to solving problems for them,” Warnica adds. Among these customers are Canada Safeway, St John’s Ravenscourt school and Manitoba Hydro.

Lowe Mechanical began working with Manitoba Hydro more than 15 years ago, now looking after all HVAC and refrigeration requirements for Hydro’s 27 facilities. This includes preventive maintenance, service, renovation and equipment

replacement projects and consultation services for HVAC design and build installations, HVAC computer room expertise and air quality systems. Benefits to Hydro, says Warnica, are Lowe’s customer-specific knowledge, technical expertise, customer-specific procedures, including safety and invoicing and long-term focus on cost savings.

With mechanics and staff, who have a diverse range of trades certifications, including HVAC, refrigeration, electricians, plumbers, gas fitters, sheet metal fabricators and specialties in various controls, Lowe offers expertise in preventive maintenance, renovations, trouble-shooting, design build, energy management and grocery store design and installation. The company has a staff of 46 with a combined industry experience in excess of 500 years, with 22 journeymen and 11 apprentices.

In January 2007, Lowe Mechanical will achieve COR certification, conferred by Construction Safety Association of Manitoba. This nationally recognized certification, verifying a fully implemented and effective safety program, serves as a pre-qualifier for many major jobs.

For Silpit, owner of seven of Winnipeg’s heritage buildings in the city core, Lowe was able to “modernize the buildings, adding air conditioning while maintaining the critical historical integrity,” Warnica says. “We were working with in the city codes, historical codes, and keeping the face of the buildings intact, while working with cost restraints.”

The task was quite different, but no less challenging, in Lowe’s work for The North West Company’s northern stores, operating in small communities throughout the North. The challenge: keeping food properly cooled, in every season, while reducing energy costs, in what are typically small stores where space is at a premium.

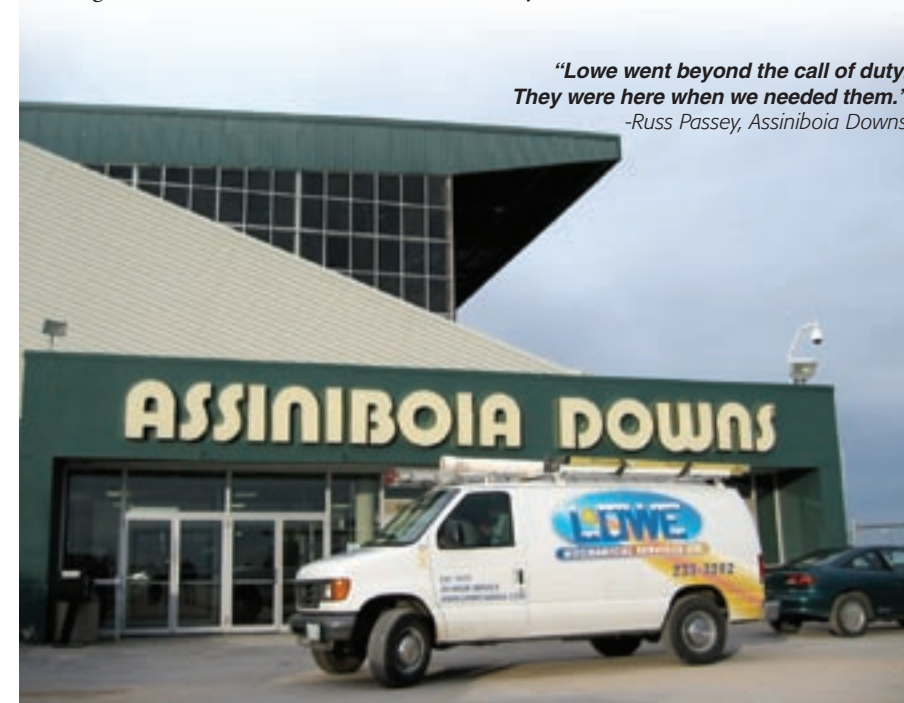
Lowe’s solution: The Arctic Machine House. This is a prefabricated refrigeration unit with compressor. The Arctic House is placed outside the store, and contains all the refrigeration equipment, pre-assembled. There is just enough space inside for the service technician to work protected from the weather.

“This design has reduced cooler installation costs and reduced the need of a 12-foot cooler from three compressors to just one and so reduced energy costs by between 30 and 35 per cent,” says Warnica. “It’s a unique solution to a common problem in remote communities.”

But then, solutions are what Lowe’s offers all its customers. “I value Lowe’s credibility, honesty and integrity. And they are always able to come up with solutions, no matter how oddball our problem is,” says Passey of Assiniboia Downs.

“We’ve done a feasibility study for the past three years, looking at all the suppliers. For our mechanical services, we’re with Lowe because other companies simply can’t compete with the value they give us for the money. Their technicians know our buildings and our operation. I’m totally confident in Lowe Mechanical!”

“Lowe went beyond the call of duty. They were here when we needed them.”
—Russ Passey, Assiniboia Downs



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