

# HOTELIER

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REPORT

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## PEAK PERFORMERS

Canada's top three hotel chains lead a parade of achievers



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## Andrew Torriani

GM & President, Ritz-Carlton Montreal  
BY ROSANNA CAIRA

Andrew Torriani got a taste of the hotel business as a child working at a collection of hotels owned by his father. In fact, at the age of 11 he was running the film projector on Saturday nights as a service to guests. Eventually, he and his three brothers moved on to more important tasks within the hotel network, holding a series of jobs, including porter and night bellman — “all the jobs that others didn’t want to do,” quips the 50-year-old hotelier.

While he’s always had a passion for hotels, after moving to Canada and eventually graduating from McGill University in Montreal, Torriani landed at Air Canada as senior director of Human Resources. It wasn’t until a few years later he and his father formed their own hotel-management company called Monaco Luxury Hotels Management, which now controls a majority stake in the Ritz-Carlton.

These days, the Holland native does double duty, serving as GM and president of Montreal’s ‘Grande Dame,’ — officially known as the Ritz-Carlton Montreal — which reopened earlier this spring after a three-year, \$200-million renovation. He’s happy to be back in business after a three-year hiatus. “The renovation took a bit longer than anticipated,” explains the father of three. “At the end of the day the product represents what we wanted it to be.”

Opened on New Year’s Eve in 1912, the iconic hotel has a storied history. It was the first Ritz-Carlton ever built by César Ritz, and through the years it has hosted dignitaries and celebrities. In fact, it’s where Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton first married in 1964.

Today, the 129-room luxury hotel is part of a

mixed-use development which also features 45 condo units. “The residences are operated independently,” explains Torriani.

With the exception of the heritage rooms, the hotel was gutted and guestrooms were refashioned to compete with the best hotels in the world. “We didn’t want to lose the character that really was the Ritz-Carlton. Our designers found a way to mix contemporary with modern. It’s a call back to older times.”

Not surprisingly, there’s great fanfare surrounding the restaurant, given it’s operated by star chef Daniel Boulud. Boasting a modern vibe, the 160-seat Maison Boulud has been full since we opened,” boasts the hotelier. “The food is delicious. It’s local and fresh and relates to our surroundings. The whole Boulud organization has a great training system.”

Now that he’s back in business, Torriani and his team of 300 want to create a luxurious haven for guests looking for the ultimate in service. “My biggest challenge is meeting customer expectations. We want to appeal to everybody who enjoys fine hotels.” And, with increasing competition, and a \$450 price tag, Torriani says it’s important “to always remain relevant.”

At the end of the day, it’s about satisfying the guest. “We have to be able to anticipate anything a customer needs before they even realize it.” ♦

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