



TOWN OF HARBOUR GRACE
BUSINESS OF THE WEEK

R. TETFORD & SON + RESTNL

BUSINESS PROFILE

Since 1958, **R. Tetford & Son** has been in business on 76 Water Street, Harbour Grace. Specializing in home furniture and appliances, R. Tetford & Son offers customers 16,000 square feet of showroom space in **two locations**, in Harbour Grace and Carbonear. The Harbour Grace location highlights bedroom ensembles and a selection of RestNL mattresses. R. Tetford & Son's Carbonear location also boasts the largest selection of home living room furniture and sofa sets on the island.



An arm of R. Tetford & Son, **RestNL** began making mattresses in Harbour Grace in 1991 and remain the only mattress factory in the province. They offer Newfoundlanders and Labradorians **affordable sleep sets** that mirror the quality of national brands. When you purchase a RestNL mattress, in addition to getting a high-quality product, you're also securing **local employment**, **supporting your community**, and **promoting the province's strength and growth!** Custom mattresses are also available for boats, campers, and other specific jobs.

Visit the showrooms at 76 Water Street, Harbour Grace, and 37 Crowdy Street, Carbonear. Visit the websites for both R. Tetford & Son and RestNL at www.tetfords.com and www.restnl.com.

QUESTION & ANSWER



TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF

I'm **Bob Tetford Jr.** and I'm an Owner/Operator of R. Tetford & Son and RestNL Mattresses in Harbour Grace, NL.

HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

Well, I graduated from Memorial University in 1998 with a business degree. I didn't plan on coming back to Harbour Grace, but things worked out that way. My grandparents were going through a period of ill health, and my parents needed a bit of help around the shop. I'd been working there in some capacity for a long time—I can remember screwing handles on furniture when I was only eight years old—so I certainly knew my way around. I grew up upstairs, and the shop was always part of my life; **I can't imagine the store not being here.** So, after filling in for a bit after university, it was natural to get more involved, and the rest is history.



HISTORY OF R. TETFORD & SON?

My grandfather was in the navy during World War II, where he'd unfortunately contracted tuberculosis—obviously a very serious condition then. When he arrived back home, he couldn't get a job, so he had to make some work for himself. For a bit he had a chip truck and—I didn't know this until recently—he built the Sharon's Drive-In building, where he operated a takeaway; and then he had a restaurant behind our current location on Water Street. He eventually sold that restaurant to Jack Mercer and opened a **dry goods store on Water Street**, where the furniture store is today. That store carried a bit of everything, but when Canadian Tire moved here, he **focused on the furniture side of things**, and that's been our business ever since.



RestNL
MATTRESSES

Manufactured in NL since 1991



HOW DID YOU GET INTO MATTRESS FABRICATION?

Restwell (RestNL) started during dad's day, when the old Newfoundland Railway still operated in Conception Bay. Previously our supplies would be unloaded at the railway station in Harbour Grace and then trucked to the shop by vehicle. When the railway stopped running, everything had to be moved by vehicle. "Your freight rates won't go up," they said at the time, but soon enough, you'd look at the shipping prices and the rates had increased significantly. After looking at the numbers, dad realized he **could make mattresses here and sell them for cheaper**. There was a factor of 4-to-1, meaning you could make four times the number of mattresses from one shipment's worth of unassembled material. So, he did a **lot of research** and got that operation up and running. But we weren't the first mattress factory in Newfoundland—there was a factory on the west coast years ago. The business works as an example of import displacement, rather than focusing solely on our export potential—that is, why bring something in for a higher price when we can create the same product here for cheaper?



STORY BEHIND THE CARBONEAR LOCATION?

That was another opportunity dad spotted. There was a vacant building for sale on Crowdy Street—this would be in the late 1990s. **That location allowed us to double our showroom space** and today hosts our living room furniture displays. That's also where we have a warehouse for stock.



HOW HAS THE MARKET CHANGED?

Well, the online marketplace has certainly grown. But I **still think there's a place for people visiting a physical showroom or store** and viewing furniture in person. I don't think that can be replicated in the online marketplace. It's just hard to judge the quality of something and, importantly, whether you like it, whether it's comfortable; people still want to touch and feel these products, in my experience. You might get a good deal online, sure, but then when you factor in the shipping, assembly, and the quality—well, that good deal might end up disappointing you. And I guess there's a certain honesty to our brand, to how we approach prices and products, and this trust makes people come here. I see it as "salt of the earth" furniture for "salt of the earth" people.

In terms of products and stock, we try to **stay on top of trends**, what people are gravitating toward today. We all have our own individual tastes, so we try to have a variety of things. And we listen to what people are asking for. If you hear multiple customers asking for something you don't have, then it might be time to bring it in, you know? And as I said, to our credit, we've **built a good reputation**, and people trust the products we carry, I think.

YOU'RE ALWAYS A RELIABLE CORPORATE SPONSOR. TELL US ABOUT THAT.

Well, we're a Harbour Grace business—this is where we're from. We might not be able to make a big change, but I **do value the importance of small changes and initiatives** in which we can get involved. If you can sponsor an event or a boat at the Regatta, that's a memory a youth will have for the rest of their lives. They might not remember who sponsored the team, but they'll always have that happy memory. We're thankful to be able to do those things for the wider community.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

Oh, keep on making this place successful. Hopefully we'll have many more years ahead of us. You never know. It'll depend on the right opportunity.



WANT YOUR BUSINESS FEATURED?

If you want to be featured as our 'Business of the Week', contact Matthew at (709) 596-3631 ext. 4, or email m.mccarthy@townofharbourgrace.ca

Restwell
MATTRESSES

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BUSINESS OF THE WEEK ARCHIVE

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