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**POWERFUL
PUBLIC SPACES**

The concept sounds simple: create an integrated newsroom where five distinct disciplines can coexist and put the 'public' back into public broadcasting. The reality is a complex logistical puzzle that challenges everyone involved – from the architects and designers to the journalists and camera crews who support them.

The idea was born in 2001 when the CBC realized its Vancouver Broadcast Centre at the corner of Hamilton and Georgia streets needed a serious facelift and modernization. Originally built in 1975, the long, narrow structure was considered a cutting edge facility; by the turn of the new century, it was a tired building increasingly unable to keep up with the rapidly changing technical demands of newscast production. Today, as construction nears completion on the \$65-million expansion and \$17-million technical equipment upgrade, CBC has once again become a visionary, a leader in forward thinking design and community involvement.

In addition to a state-of-the-art, integrated newsroom – the true jewel of this project and, in fact, the prime reason the expansion was undertaken – there is also a 4,000-square-foot community performance studio, outdoor amphitheatre-style stage, 8,500 square feet of office space that will be awarded on a rent-free, cost-recovery only basis to local arts and cultural organizations including a permanent new headquarters for the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society. Replacing the long, uninviting exterior plaza is a dynamic blend of pedestrian spaces, water features, art work and expansive glass window walls that provide engaging points of visual interaction with the inner workings of an active broadcast centre and newsroom. An atrium-style entry way also welcomes the passersby to enter and discover just what the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is all about.

This is the fourth CBC building to undergo renovations, and CBC's project manager, Ken Golemba, is delighted by the results. "Previously, despite best efforts, inter-



PHOTOS: MICHAEL BOLAND

CBC Radio-Canada Renovation

by Susan M. Boyce

action between the different news lines was difficult. Now we have all five – French TV, French Radio, English TV, English Radio and English Radio Current Affairs, as well as CBC's web component – under a single roof."

Innovation and challenge began right with the financing. By selling a storage facility in Burnaby and negotiating a second, complex deal with Concert Properties who will purchase the southern half of CBC's downtown Vancouver property – currently used as an above-ground parking lot – for condominium development, CBC raised a significant proportion of the funds. Combined with projected revenue from retail spaces, projections indicate the project will be completed without needing to dip into the public coffers.

Although the visible portion of the existing building is long and narrow

along the edge of the property backing onto Cambie Street, according to Joost Bakker, partner with the firm Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden and lead architect for the redevelopment, once below the surface the facility is much broader. Structural columns threaded three storeys down through this existing space created the foundation for a cantilevered concrete slab that would become the newsroom studio floor – a slab that had to be flat and vibration-free to accommodate the demands of moving cameras and lighting equipment and acoustic isolation necessary during broadcast. "The newsroom floor now actually floats above the old plaza and can be lifted off in sections for repair or maintenance," Bakker explains, adding most of the original concrete was left in place.

"The floor was especially difficult

due to the incredible number of cable trays required for the under-floor wiring and compounded by the fact the air supply system also runs through the floor's underside of the floor," adds Ed Prentice from Scott Construction Management Ltd. "Plus, we had to schedule noisy and invasive works around all the program filming and radio broadcasts. Some days it was definitely stop and go as live news hits were being broadcast."

The new newsroom and atrium are over 25,000 square feet filled with modern technology. The space, designed specifically to easy reconfiguration whenever needed, houses more than 150 work stations, plus television and radio studios, control rooms and a central news assignment desk. Yet the ambiance is one of openness, of transparency and communication. The ceiling soars over 30 feet at some points

Clockwise from top: CBC's integrated newsroom; news anchor Ian Hanomansing prepares for Vancouver at Six; on the weather set with Claire Martin, in early to finalize the forecast.





PHOTOS: MICHAEL BOLAND

Acoustic ceiling panels in the newsroom. Right: Jenna Chow and Theresa Lalonde on the air, in studio with guest.

and natural light penetrates through banks of windows and skylights.

"We created generous primary corridors to facilitate collaboration between journalists and enhance the feeling that everyone is part of the same team," says Susan Steeves, partner in Seeton Shinkewski Design Group and lead interior designer, adding news stories also now have more consistent delivery. "Reporters are all in the same room so they share ideas, but there is also the ability to send one camera person

for both French and English TV rather than two."

A solution to the City of Vancouver's parking requirement came in the form of additional parking in what was at once a 30-foot, underground paint and scenery construction bay. "Using mini piles plus a needle beam, regular footings and concrete construction, the design created a new level of suspended parking with elevated slabs up to street level," Prentice explains.

Outside, the landscaping is,

according to Bruce Hemstock, principal with PWL Partnership Landscaping Architects Inc., a direct response to Vancouver initiative to recognize Georgia Street as a major downtown 'Great Street,' a vibrant public area that contributes to the positive identity of the CBC. "Materials have all been selected for their durability, clean lines and ability to work as unifying elements." He cites the three basalt bands in the ground plane adjacent to the Hamilton Street sidewalk and east/west banding that reinforces the geometry and massing of iconic ventilation shafts on the building's west face as just two.

A very real part of the puzzle was keeping the entire broadcast centre running as construction proceeded around it. Rigorous sound transference testing was a pre-start component of every phase, demolition was done by crunching down old structures rather than the much faster and more traditional method of a wrecking ball, and people were moved as few times as possible as the renovation progressed around them.

"For many years, people would walk past this building and not even realize what it was," Golemba acknowledges. "No longer. Now, we will not only be able to provide better programming, more efficiently, but this building will

help us develop a new relationship with the community. It will welcome people to come inside – to discover for themselves what the CBC stands for, what we do here, and to become part of it themselves." ■

LOCATION

700 Hamilton Street
Vancouver, B.C.

OWNER/DEVELOPER

CBC Radio-Canada

ARCHITECT

Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Scott Construction Group

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

Glottman Simpson Consulting Engineers

MECHANICAL/

ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

AECOM

LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT

PWL Partnership Landscaping
Architects Inc.

INTERIOR DESIGN CONSULTANT


Seeton Shinkewski Design Group

TOTAL AREA


247,500 square feet

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST

\$82 million



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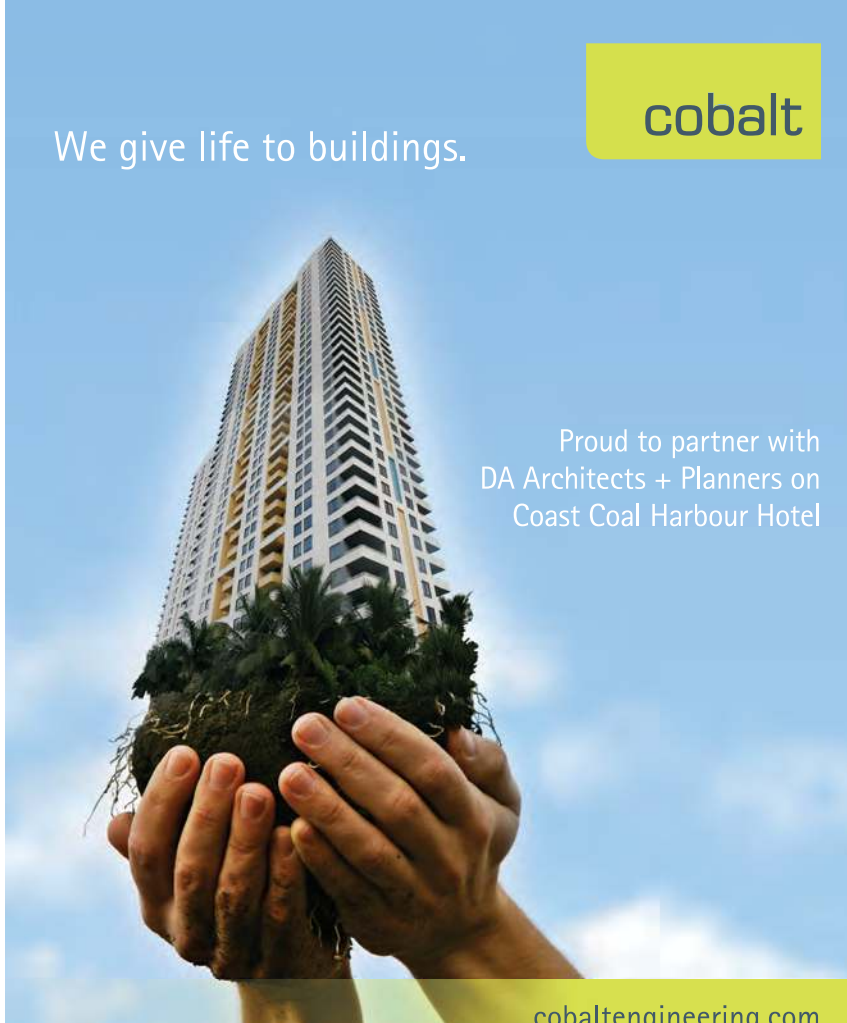
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