

January 25, 2008

New Calgary Courts Centre celebrates grand opening

Calgary... The grand opening of Calgary Courts Centre makes it official—Calgary is now home to the largest courthouse in Canada. The new \$300-million facility promises to streamline the delivery of justice in Calgary, set a new standard for courtroom technology, and lead by example with an environmentally conscious design.

“What began as a vision to improve the Calgary court system has not only brought the courts together, but has resulted in a world-class addition to the city’s skyline,” said Premier Ed Stelmach. “This one-stop shop for justice is a big step forward in ensuring Albertans have easy access to the courts.”

The one-million-square-foot facility houses both the Court of Queen’s Bench and the Provincial Court of Alberta. With 73 courtrooms under one roof, the new Calgary Courts Centre replaces five smaller court facilities that were scattered throughout downtown Calgary.

“The Calgary Courts Centre simplifies access to the justice system in Calgary,” said Ron Stevens, Deputy Premier and Minister of Justice and Attorney General. “It is a fulfillment of the government’s mandate to provide efficient, functional and safe court facilities for the benefit of Albertans.”

Construction of the new courthouse began in August 2004. Three years later, in August 2007, a phased move-in began and the facility was open to the public on September 4, 2007. The project has remained on budget.

“I would like to congratulate all of the contractors, consultants and provincial employees who worked so hard to complete this project,” said Luke Ouellette, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. “It is a tremendous achievement that will serve as a great source of pride for everyone involved.”

Visitors to the Calgary Courts Centre will notice many technical features like airport-style security, electronic dockets and computer kiosks to help them find their way.

“The new Calgary Courts Centre highlights the Alberta government’s commitment to providing a safe courthouse environment for the public, staff and offenders,” said Fred Lindsay, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. “During the first four months of operation, Alberta Sheriffs, backed by state-of-the-art equipment, prevented over 3,000 items such as knives and box cutters from entering the facility.”

Phase two of the project includes restoration of the historic Court of Appeal building, demolition of the Court of Queen's Bench building, and construction of a 700-stall underground parkade with an urban park on the Queen’s Bench site. Phase two will start this spring at an estimated cost of \$50 million.

Ensuring easy access to the courts is part of Premier Stelmach’s plan to secure Alberta’s future by building communities, greening our growth and creating opportunities.

Background: 'Calgary Courts Centre Facts' is attached

Media inquiries may be directed to:

David Dear, Justice and Attorney General, 780-427-8530 or 780-718-1932 (cell)

Darcy Scott, Infrastructure and Transportation, 780-914-9040 (cell)

Christine Wronko, Solicitor General and Public Security, 780-427-6171

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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Calgary Courts Centre Facts

About the building

- Highest point: 129.8 metres
- The 20-floor south tower: 99.7 metres
- The 24-floor north tower: 116.9 metres
- The Calgary Courts Centre's floors are taller than conventional buildings—its 24 courtroom stories equal a regular 32-storey building.
- One of the most striking architectural features of the building is the 125-metre, full-height glass atrium that connects the two towers. The glass public elevators run in the centre of the atrium providing spectacular views to the city and to the Rocky Mountains.
- This is one of the largest consolidated courthouses in all of North America, with one-million square feet of floor space and 73 courtrooms.
- There are 12 public elevators – six hi-rise and six low-rise.
- Approximately 12 million kilograms of rebar was used in the building—that's equivalent to the weight of 4,000 yellow school buses.
- The building contains 22,221 square metres of glass.
- At the start of construction, 77,328 cubic metres of material was excavated—enough to fill 77 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

People

- Approximately 600 people work in the Calgary Courts Centre, including justices and judges, security personnel and court, library and external agencies' employees.
- About 1,000 people (600 at peak of construction) worked on the construction project.

Cost and Partners

- The Government of Alberta funded the project at a cost of \$300 million. The private sector designed, built and operates the facility.
- Partners:
 - Government of Alberta
 - GWL Realty Advisors Inc.
 - CANA Management Ltd.
 - Kasian Architecture Interior Design and Planning
 - Spillis Candela – DMJM
 - NORR Limited
 - SNC-Lavalin ProFac Inc.
 - RGO Office Furnishings
 - Stantec Consulting
 - Hemisphere Engineering
 - Stebnicki Robertson and Associates
 - AMEC

Timelines

- Phase one started in August 2004; Phase two is set to start in spring 2008.
- Phase one of the project consists of two atrium-linked towers with a 24-floor north tower and a

20-floor south tower, and a secure underground parkade. An additional 700 parking stalls are included in Phase Two.

Technology

- The Calgary Courts Centre includes state-of-the-art technology that will enable advanced solutions for courtroom audio, presentation, digital signage, communication and remote conferencing.
- *Courtrooms*: Audio elements include fixed microphones, amplified speakers, digital recording, and wireless microphones. A variety of LCD screens are set up in the courtroom to ensure accessibility of information for the spectators, jury members, the witness and the accused. Each courtroom has a moveable podium that allows presentation of video, images, and documents. Video conferencing, remote witness facilitation and electronic annotation will also be available.
- *Digital Signage*: Large LCD monitors will be positioned strategically throughout the courthouse, with a large number located on the main floor. These monitors list the courtroom participants in a fashion similar to airport departure/arrival monitors. Each courtroom will be equipped with a smaller monitor located outside the door to show the courtroom-specific events.
- *Specialty Courtrooms*: There are four specialty courtrooms – large trial courtroom, high security courtroom, commercial courtroom, and a special multipurpose/Aboriginal courtroom. The high security and commercial courtrooms are designed for proceedings involving multiple litigants. The Aboriginal courtroom is equipped with a healing circle and ventilation system to allow for smudging.

Green building design and operations

- The building's design is expected to meet or exceed the [LEED Silver](#) standard, which government adopted in May 2006. For more information about LEED, visit the Canada Green Building Council at <http://www.cagbc.org>. The building's operations will satisfy the [BOMA Go Green](#) standard, which government adopted in March 2006 for all major government-owned and supported facilities. For more information on Go Green, visit <http://www.bomagogreen.com>.
- Notable sustainable green design features include low-flow toilets, triple-glazed windows, rainwater collection for irrigation, a heat reclaim recovery system, daylight harvesting, re-use of salvaged construction materials from demolition, proximity to the C-train and the availability of bicycle storage with showers and change room facilities to encourage the use of non-automotive means of transportation.

The need for a new courthouse

- Calgary's Court of Queen's Bench and Provincial Court were, until now, located in five separate facilities: the Provincial Court building; the John J. Bowlen Building; Court of Queen's Bench building; Trimac House and Rocky Mountain Plaza. A sixth building, the Courthouse Annex, was demolished to make way for construction of the new project. All courts were near or over capacity and there was continued pressure to expand due to population and business growth.
- There was also a need to improve courtroom technology, security, and to create more healthy buildings. Reasons for this include:
 - Growth in workload of the courts since the 1970s
 - Longer and more complex proceedings
 - Increased complex corporate litigation due to the growth and development of Calgary as a major business centre

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