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Winnipeg Free Press - ONLINE EDITION

Swank office space up for grabs Former Canwest digs featured in Hollywood films

By: Geoff Kirbyson

Posted: 01/29/2011 7:02 AM | [Comments: 12](#)

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The 33rd floor's 4,504 square feet include a finished boardroom, a meeting area and a bar that was relocated from the basement of Izzy Asper's Wellington Crescent bungalow.

IT has appeared in Hollywood movies and has been called the best office space between Calgary and Toronto but it's unclear when the top three floors of 201 Portage will spring to life once again.

Creswin Properties, which owns the tower formerly known as Canwest Place, has toured commercial real estate brokers through the more than 22,000 square feet that made up the long-time home of Canwest Global Communications. (The former media giant went bankrupt last year and its newspaper and broadcasting assets were subsequently sold off.) "I certainly think it would be the nicest space combined with the nicest view in Winnipeg," said Wayne Johnson, a commercial and leasing specialist with Royal LePage Dynamic Real Estate. "But it's always a matter of taste and everybody's taste is different."

The Richardson family, for example, might put up an argument in favour of its offices across the street, he said.

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OUR COMMUNITIES

Most Winnipeggers haven't been up to the top of the city's tallest skyscraper in person but they may have seen the space if they're movie buffs. The offices of the Asper family and other Canwest executives were used in *Shall We Dance?*, the 2004 movie starring Richard Gere and Jennifer Lopez.

They were also featured in *The Crooked E*, the 2003 made-for-television film which told the story of Enron, one of America's most spectacular corporate crashes. In *The Crooked E*, one disillusioned employee is shown walking on to the roof of the building and throwing a bunch of papers in the air.

One former Canwest employee said former CEO Leonard Asper regularly joked about having a company barbecue on the roof.

"It would have been way too windy and way too terrifying," the employee said.

Canwest's offices were renowned for their swanky furniture and dark mahogany desks, all of which are still in place. The 33rd floor boasts a glassed-in boardroom, which prompted occasional comparisons to the 1960s spy TV show, *Get Smart*, where Maxwell Smart's preferred means of communicating top-secret information was via the cone of silence. Also on the 33rd floor is a pool table complete with a painted-on logo of Canwest.

"When the ball was moving slowly, it would go slightly off kilter when it hit the logo," the employee said.

The boardroom and several other offices have plaques on the wall denoting they are named after Canwest's founders, Izzy Asper and Peter Liba.

The three floors also have a firesuppression system, which locks down one floor from the rest to ensure the flames don't spread. It was never used but reportedly went off once by mistake about a decade ago, locking a number of employees on the 33rd floor for several hours.

A Creswin representative declined an interview request for this story.

Johnson doubts anybody from the Asper family will recognize the three floors once a new tenant — or more likely tenants — is found. When office space is renovated to suit a particular company's needs, it rarely fits with the tastes of subsequent tenants.

"It would have to be a high-end corporate user, very close to a head-office type of operation. That's what it was designed for and how it presents itself. It's much more likely that it will be altered and probably greatly altered. That happens so often that the landlords usually rip the space back themselves and don't even try to find a tenant to suit the same layout," he said.

Creswin hasn't publicly released what it would cost to take over the high-end offices. Industry estimates peg the net lease rate at slightly less than \$20 per square foot per year. The net lease rate for A class space in downtown Winnipeg is approximately \$17 per square foot per year.

geoff.kirbyson@freepress.mb.ca

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POSTED BY: **23589262**

JANUARY 30, 2011 AT 11:02 AM

hey BH - what have you done for the betterment of society that gives u the right to post anonymously ?

they built something, used much of the the profits to make Winnipeg a better place and due to some unexpected changes in the economy and the media industry the business was sold to shaw and others

0

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POSTED BY: **BH**

JANUARY 30, 2011 AT 9:12 AM



POLL

When was the last time you visited the Paddlewheel?

- I've visited in 2011.
- In the last decade.
- 1980s - 1990s.
- More than 30 years ago.
- What's the Paddlewheel?

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“ It is getting difficult to care about heritage in Winnipeg anymore. Too much heartbreak as icons of the past get erased in the name of "progress." With the death of the Paddlewheel I officially give up on caring about the past glory of our city. Do your worst developers, turn our historic downtown into one big plastic money making machine, the past doesn't matter anymore. ”

Posted by: **Trevor**
Article: [Paddlewheel Restaurant up for renovations](#)

nice try to spin a company disaster into a positive

The Aspers drove this company into the ground, its not a good thing.

0 1

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POSTED BY: **Gordon Halushka**
JANUARY 29, 2011 AT 1:08 PM

Being one of the moving contractors on the Asper move to the T.D.building brings back a host of memories.Packing the personal belongings of Jack Fraser, head of the once-mighty Federal Industries Ltd.was an eye opener.Mr. Fraser was moving out,on how the successful live-marble and gold private bathroom,pictures of the famous-a smiling Prince Charles and Jack,and in the boardroom where the flick of a switch moved the window shutters up to reveal the sunrise.But the one memory that I'll won't forget is near the end of the move as a group of movers stood in a half circle in the reception area, Mr.Izzy Asper standing in the break of the circle facing us thanked the crew for a job well done,he was beaming,cigarette in hand, and smiling,we were all smiling, God what a moment,Izzy Asper was on top of the world and he was thoughtful enough to share it with us .

2 1

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POSTED BY: **23589262**
JANUARY 29, 2011 AT 12:07 PM

great article - would be great if someone could use that top floor boardroom as is - (if i had won the \$50 mil last night it would be leased by now by me !)

what a great place for a restaurant ... 4504 sf at \$20 + 20 ca & tax =\$15k/mnth about the sf rate starbucks pays for their stores

ask starbucks to open up there - place would be packed (coffee and 1/2 hour at table \$5 - by window \$10)

what an awesome place for an art gallery , hall of fame , penthouse , tourist attraction (Empire state bldg / eiffel tower/ etc)

best idea by thumb votes gets \$20 gift certificate to Starbucks - Free Press can take it out of my account !!!! ill stick \$20 in now

2 1

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POSTED BY: **Mad Monty**
JANUARY 29, 2011 AT 12:02 PM

Very impressive space!! Definitely one of the most prestigious locations in the city. I am sure it will attract a very high profile tenant.

2 0

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POSTED BY: **wikimedis**
JANUARY 29, 2011 AT 11:21 AM

Who the **** cares?

6 5

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POSTED BY: **Whattthewhat**
JANUARY 29, 2011 AT 11:08 AM

Shouldn't this be left to the real estate agents to handle... does this mean the Free Press will feature a full article on a house I'd like to sell? sheesh Great advertising for Creswin. Poor journalism.

9 3

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POSTED BY: **dubois1**
JANUARY 29, 2011 AT 10:42 AM

Um.....is this a real estate ad?

7 3

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POSTED BY: **Hold on there**
JANUARY 29, 2011 AT 10:40 AM

I say let some non profits in for free rent until a suitable tenant can be found. That's the least the Aspers can do after the Stadium fiasco and the building of Canada's biggest White Elephant. With three floors I'm sure quite a few non profits could move in for a year or two. It would be the only time in their existence of getting some class A space, and David can get some tax write-offs.

5 2

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POSTED BY: **Heart**
JANUARY 29, 2011 AT 10:21 AM

Many of us still know this building as the TD building. I honestly didn't even know Canwest took over ownership until the last couple of years.

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StrindbergFest

Strindberg was a brilliant, but controversial Swedish author who wrote short stories, autobiographical novels, poetry and, of course, many plays. He had tempestuous relationships with friends and enemies alike, not to mention his three wives. ...

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