



PROPERTY REPORT

## The right building for where it stands

VITO CUPOLI

Special to Globe and Mail Update

Published Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2011 6:08AM EST

4 comments



Tweet



Print



The search for the building of the future doesn't take you to Toronto, Calgary or even Manhattan. Instead, it leads six blocks from Winnipeg's iconic corner, Portage and Main, to Manitoba Hydro Place.

Open for about a year, this game-changing, 28-storey, \$278-million office tower has been captivating designers around the world. Its signature architecture and healthy interior environment, and its integration with public transit, the local community and, most notably, the local climate, are all drawing attention.

Tom Akerstream, Hydro's corporate facilities manager, was part of the design team from the outset. "We were able to integrate many things into a singular building that is performing to charter and winning engineering and architectural awards," he says. "This building shows you can achieve all of your energy objectives and still have a stunning and very comfortable building."

Julie Gervino, visitor services co-ordinator, says workers in the building, who came from 12 offices scattered around Winnipeg's suburbs, can smell the difference. "The most notable feature is the fresh air," she says. "The air quality is exceptional. It's nothing you see when you walk in, but it's something you certainly notice if you've been in the building for even a little while or if you've worked in other tall office buildings."

Air is not recycled at Hydro Place. Instead, nearly three times each hour, inside air is replenished using a passive system that employs Winnipeg's famous southerly wind. Facing the wind are the buildings "lungs" – three stacked atria, each six floors tall, drawing and conditioning a continuous supply of air.

Bruce Kuwabara, an architect whose Toronto-based firm KPMB led the project team, says the big idea was to separate ventilation from heating and cooling. As a result, air coming into an atrium is warmed or cooled, depending on the season. It is then drawn into workspaces, where it drifts up from floor vents. It leaves the building through an impressive solar chimney that soars above the structure.

Heating and cooling are provided by an enormous geothermal system bored into the ground below. Both radiate through the concrete ceilings to produce an even temperature of 20 degrees all year long.

Winnipeg is the sunniest large city in Canada, and the sun plays an integral role in Hydro Place. The structure was positioned to gather as much daylight as possible, which streams through its floor-to-ceiling windows.

The building has 25,000 points of environmental control, including fans, sun blinds, lighting and operable windows. All create a single organism that constantly adjusts itself to the elements of sun, wind and temperature.

As a result of these features, Hydro Place uses 60 per cent less energy than the model national energy code for buildings (MNECB), a government efficiency baseline for new buildings in Canada.

integration. Both Mr. Kuwabara and Mr. Akerstream use the word a lot when discussing the project.

The tower was designed to mesh with nearby public transit. Before the move 95 per cent of Hydro's employees drove to work alone. That number has fallen to 45 per cent today.

To encourage employees to embrace their new neighbourhood, the building has no food court and only one restaurant. More than 40 places to eat and drink can be found nearby.

The neighbourhood is reaping the rewards in the form of increased sales and development activity, says Stefano Grande, executive director of Winnipeg's downtown improvement zone. The new structure has had "a powerful impact on the market value of buildings in and around it," Mr. Grande says. "A number of other buildings have changed hands since the opening, which indicates renewed investor confidence in the area."

Hydro Place may not have gained attention from a wide audience but it's a big hit in architectural circles. Last month, it was named the best engineered building in Canada by the Canadian Consulting Engineers Association and, last year it was designated the best tall building in the Americas from the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat. "Pretty good considering it is only 28 storeys tall," Mr. Kuwabara says.

In citing the building, the council noted: "Manitoba Hydro Place stands apart as the first of the next generation of sustainable buildings that use simple, time-tested and repeatable concepts in conjunction with science and technology to achieve a 'living building.'"

The project was further praised for how features combine to achieve energy and comfort goals.

"It is certainly a great, world class building, and a wonderful example of what you can do when you want to do the right thing intelligently," says Ted Kesik, professor of building science at the University of Toronto. "There's nothing about it that I don't like. It's a beautiful experience inside the building, too."

While Hydro Place sets many examples, it can't be copied, Mr. Kuwabara says. "You couldn't just pick it up and move this building to someplace else. For instance, the wind and sun would be different. It's not just some goody-goody thing we did to go out and design a sustainable building as an exercise. It's a building for this particular place, and it misses the point to think you can plunk it down anywhere and have it work, unless you have a similar climate.

"This building is the result of integrated design and integrated thinking."

Special to The Globe and Mail

4 comments



Tweet



Print



Sponsored Links

Improve Customer Experience

Read How Adobe Solutions Can Help, Download Free Forrester Report Now.  
[www.Adobe.com/Banking](http://www.Adobe.com/Banking)

CitiFX Pro-Rated Best Retail FX Platform

Get a Free Trial Account & Experience the Advantages of Trading Forex with Citi  
[www.CitiFXPro.com](http://www.CitiFXPro.com)

Discover Brokerage Services at MF Global

MF Global provides trading and hedging solutions across the major asset classes.  
[www.mfglobal.com](http://www.mfglobal.com)

Advertise Here

TODAY'S MUST READS

REPORT ON BUSINESS

How to win at the MBA competition

REPORT ON BUSINESS

The art of going from free to fee

REPORT ON BUSINESS

Call it Soviet-era Monopoly: \$200 for passing Go? Nyet

NEWS

John Ibbitson discusses Harper's five years in office

LIFE

What I learned from a year in my yoga pants

MORE FROM THE GLOBE AND MAIL



NEWS

35 killed in 'terrorist' bomb at Moscow's busiest airport



GLOBE INVESTOR

The lavish lifestyle of value investor Charles Brandes



LIFE

Oprah reveals her family secret



GLOBE DRIVE

Five ways to score a fair deal at the dealership

MOST POPULAR STORIES

How to win at the MBA competition

Spanish banks need €20-billion infusion

Call it Soviet-era Monopoly: \$200 for passing Go? Nyet

The art of going from free to fee

The four-letter word that petrifies the establishment

Back to top

MORE TOP STORIES



POLITICS

Canadians rank Arctic sovereignty as top foreign-policy priority



OPINIONS

Political discourse 2011



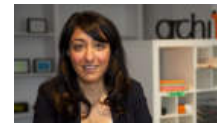
SPORTS

Pens confirm Crosby will miss all-star weekend



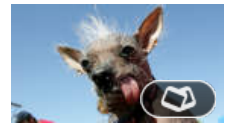
ARTS

Peter Weir comes in from the cold



YOUR BUSINESS

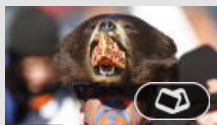
The four-letter word that petrifies the establishment



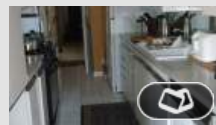
GLOBE INVESTOR

Stars and Dogs for this week

PHOTOS



Best from the past 24 hours



Advice: Our designers fix your ugly rooms



Photos of the Moscow airport explosion

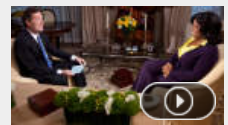
VIDEO



Deadly blast kills dozens at Moscow airport



Franco won't skip class for Oscars



Oprah's family secret revealed



Globe2Go



e-Edition



Mobile



Newsletters



Newspaper



RSS

- Home
- News
- Commentary
- Business
- Investing
- Sports
- Life
- Arts
- Technology
- Drive
- Site map

- More Sections
- Appointments
- Art Store
- Births & Announcements
- Careers
- Globe Campus
- Classifieds
- Classroom Edition
- Contests
- Deaths
- Newspaper Ads
- Real Estate
- Special Reports
- Sustainability mandate

- Globe Plus
- Subscribe
- Globe Recognition
- Recognition card
- Advertise
- Advertise with us
- Newspaper
- Magazine
- Online
- Marketing Solutions Group
- Media Central
- Classifieds

- Online
- Help
- Contact Us
- Newspaper
- Customer Care
- Contact Us
- Staff
- Press Room
- Corrections
- Subscribe
- Vacation Stops
- Change Address

- Privacy Policy
- Terms & Conditions
- Disclaimer
- Jobs at The Globe & Mail

© Copyright 2011 The Globe and Mail Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
 444 Front St. W., Toronto, ON Canada M5V 2S9  
 Phillip Crowley, Publisher