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BUSINESS

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

High-profile fan for Hydro tower Green-building guru quite impressed

By: Murray McNeill
Posted: 09/29/2010 1:00 AM | [Comments: 5](#)

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"It's phenomenal. It really sets a new standard for Canada" — Nancy Searchfield, vice-chairwoman of the Canada Green Building Council, raving about the Manitoba Hydro Building.

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Manitoba Hydro's downtown office tower has a new high-profile admirer, and she'll be shouting her love from the rooftops.

"It's phenomenal," Nancy Searchfield, vice-chairwoman of the Canada Green Building Council and one of the country's leading experts on sustainable buildings, told a Winnipeg business luncheon on Tuesday. "It really sets a new standard for Canada."

Searchfield, who also sits on the board of advisers for the World Green Building Council, said she has speaking engagements around the world and she'll be singing the praises of the Hydro building every chance she gets.

"Some of the features in there are just cutting-edge."

The Hydro building wasn't the only thing that left a huge impression on Searchfield when the Toronto-based commercial real estate agent toured the downtown prior to Tuesday's luncheon, which was organized by the commercial division of the Winnipeg Realtors. She also fell in love with the city's abundant supply of heritage buildings.

"You've got the best of the spectrum here," she said in an interview after her speech on sustainable buildings. "Beautiful, classic heritage buildings that are still standing... and this beautiful new tower. It almost sets a new theme for your city:

the best of the new and the best of the old."

Searchfield said some of the features that impressed her the most about the Hydro building were its geothermal heating and cooling system, the three indoor water features that either humidify or dehumidify air as it enters the building, the solar chimney that provides energy-free passive ventilation, and the windows that can open.

And she said she was also impressed to learn the building's architect -- Bruce Kuwabara of Kuwabara, Payne, McKenna, Blumberg Architects in Toronto -- repositioned one of the office towers so it wouldn't cast a shadow on the public green space on the property.

"That's true sustainability. Not just the green, but also taking into consideration the... community," she said.

The main theme of Searchfield's luncheon address was that the international green-building movement is not a fad. Governments are mandating it, developers are recognizing the economic benefits of it, and tenants are demanding it.

"The message is that it is here, and it is here to stay because it is simply the best practice," she said.

"The question is not whether you can afford to go green, it's whether you can afford not to."

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Tuesday's session also featured a brief panel discussion with three local construction industry officials -- an architect, an industrial developer and a construction company executive.

All three agreed the green-building movement is gaining increased acceptance among local developers, property owners and managers and tenants.

"It's out there," said Robin Lee, managing partner of Pre Con Construction. "Its baby steps -- a little bit at a time -- but it's happening."

Christine Paquette, executive director of the Manitoba Chapter of the Canada Green Building Council, said in an interview 109 Manitoba projects are registered with the internationally recognized Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program.

Six of them have achieved their LEED certification. The remainder are either still going through the lengthy certification process, or are awaiting confirmation that they're certified.

She said most of the applicants are aiming for at least a Silver LEED designation for their building. (The four LEED designations are certified, silver, gold and platinum).

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POSTED BY: **Coach**
SEPTEMBER 30, 2010 AT 6:51 AM

Hey Bob, if you don't like the new building, maybe you should ask to be transferred to Taylor or to the old offices on Waverley, I'm sure you'll change your tune. As far as the facilities go, everything you need is within a five minute walk of the building. Is it too far to walk five minutes to get to the gym?

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POSTED BY: **adrian s**
SEPTEMBER 29, 2010 AT 2:13 PM

anyone blaming the province for this is an idiot this was something forced by the city when it sold winnipeg hydro to manitoba hydro...

as for the building its high end thats for sure.. the cost over runs are kinda hard to avoid when the global economy gets over heated combinded with... massive skill trades shortages....

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POSTED BY: **Bobs Your Uncle**
SEPTEMBER 29, 2010 AT 11:51 AM

Green...yes

Crappy to work in....yes

anything for employees....no

No cafeteria, no gym facility, cheap offices and cubicles, far too bright lighting (many employees wear sunglasses in the office).

Yeah...it's an achievement alright...in making me want to retire earlier..

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POSTED BY: **Suburban Capitalist**
SEPTEMBER 29, 2010 AT 10:54 AM

A Toronto based real estate agent commenting on an over budget building designed by a Toronto based architect...and paid for by Manitoba hydro's captive customers. (once again -"a heck'uv a job, Mr. Selinger!")

Tell me again why we would care what someone from T.O., with no money in the game, would think of an over budget government building?

There is a joke that what makes an expert an "expert" is that they are "someone from out of town". This article validates this old joke. Too bad the Free Press doesn't get it.

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POSTED BY: **evadwal**
SEPTEMBER 29, 2010 AT 8:17 AM

Yay! Some good news about Winnipeg! Not only that, but (so far) no curmudgeonly comments about how "She should go to the North End, etc." from Free Press readers!!

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Thumbs up for this program. Policing is so much more than patrolling with guns drawn or responding to 911 calls. The only way Winnipeg will ever have a chance of dealing with the real social issues in the North End is through a collaborative approach between the Police, Social Services arms of the Government, and the community in the area (including residents, businesses, parents, etc.).

Posted by: R45
Article: [The halfway is his beat](#)

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