

Richmond's new public safety headquarters opens to marching Red Serge and bagpipes

BY ALAN CAMPBELL, RICHMOND NEWS
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The new public safety headquarters will house the RCMP's Richmond detachment and a number of the forces regional services.

Photograph by: submitted, for Richmond News

Outside, the sharp skirl of the bagpipes cut through the cold, thick November air as clouds of warm breath funneled from the mouths of the Mounties on parade.

In front of a top table line of emergency service chiefs, politicians and senior city staff, one of the Red Serge slowly raised a rain-spattered Maple Leaf into the gray sky to signify the official opening of Richmond's new community safety headquarters Monday.

In contrast, the inside of the \$36 million building - just south of the Steveston Highway/No. 5 Road intersection - was bathed in warm daylight from its massive window ceiling and festooned with tropical plants standing to attention alongside a pair of spiraled staircases.

As well as being the new home for the RCMP's Richmond detachment, it will also be house a number of the force's regional services, including the Integrated Forensic Identification Service and Police Dog Service.

"This is not a project that happened overnight," Mayor Malcolm Brodie told a select audience of invited guests and media.

"This has been worked on for almost all of the last decade. Our public safety buildings were outdated, few were built to withstand earthquakes, which would be alarming, just when you need (the emergency services) the most."

Brodie said the opening is one of the most significant days in the city's public safety history.

"This will make sure we meet the community's needs for many years to come and it consolidates our policing services and public safety under one roof."

The RCMP's deputy commissioner, Peter German, said Richmond had "hit the jackpot" with the opening of the new headquarters, formerly the home of the 2010 Games security unit.

"Crime crosses borders, so it's important to have the integrated units co-located here," German said of the fact many special RCMP units will now base themselves at the new building.

As well as being built to withstand earthquakes, the building incorporates cutting edge design and technology and centralizes most of Richmond's policing operations under one roof.

"The Royal Canadian Mounted Police has a long and proud history in Canada and British Columbia. In fact, Richmond was one of the first communities we served," said Supt. Rendall Nessel.

"This year will mark the 60th anniversary of the RCMP in _ Richmond and it has been a privilege to serve this community."

By purchasing and reusing an existing building, it is estimated the city saved at least \$15 to 20 million, based on various initial estimates, when the city had planned to construct an entirely new community safety building.

The new building incorporates a variety of improvements, including a new digital fingerprint scanner, which, according to the city, will speed up the fingerprinting process and increase efficiency of fingerprint searches.

The new building is also built to LEED Gold Standards (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), an international standard for rating environmentally-friendly building practices incorporated in the design, construction and operations of a building.

The building has many energy savings features, including solar panels on the exterior walls for heating water, a white roof to reflect the heat from the sun, drought resistant landscaping, and improved indoor environmental air quality.

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