

Cube provides safety from disaster

Saanich stronghold designed to secure high-ranking officials

BY DARRON KLOSTER

S/ ANICH — If a big earthquake hits or a major tsunami surges, the premier and other high-ranking government officials will be airlifted into a light-industrial patch of Saanich and secured within the two-foot-thick concrete walls of a nondescript warehouse that few know even exists.

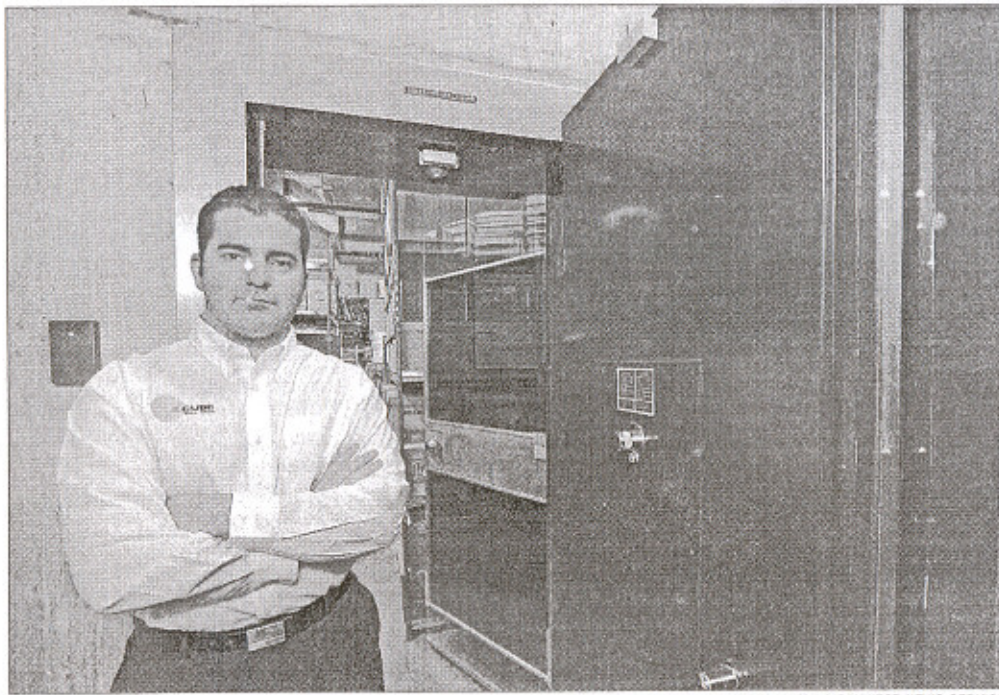
They'll bunk there with millions of priceless documents from the B.C. Archives, art treasures from private collectors, generations of family jewels and the financial records of banks and corporations.

And maybe, if he's visiting, the prime minister himself.

Much of the contents of Cube — the new name given the privately owned storage facility hidden behind a rock outcropping and string of pines along Commerce Circle — are kept private from even the family that owns the cavernous facility with 3,000 cubic metres of storage space and emergency-response areas.

"We don't see a lot of what's in here because the owners put them in sealed boxes... we just retrieve it for them using bar-codes," said Michael Weston, who built the warehouse to some incredible specifications in 1990 and has operated it under Data Base File Tech and InfoSure brands until Thursday's public re-branding.

The Weston family had to briefly blow its carefully-crafted cover as it beefs up its business model to offer increased data storage for personal-



JOHN MACKAY/CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

Chris Weston, in what is considered Canada's most secure building on Commerce Circle in Saanich.

computer users and backup servers for businesses and institutions.

Security is certainly the selling point in this smaller version of Fort Knox. The building is designed to withstand earthquakes up to 9.5 on the Richter scale and 135 kilometre-per-hour winds. It sits on an inverted cone of igneous rock that plunges 22 kilometres into the crust, and it's anchored there with steel rods thicker than your leg. At 35 metres above sea level, you likely wouldn't get wet in a tsunami.

It has its own power system, helicopter landing pad and fuel, and there isn't a gas line or bore hole anywhere near the place.

Hidden cameras watch every movement throughout the 5,400 square metres of vaults, warehouse and office space, including a football-field-sized room 18 metres high with 400,000 file boxes.

There are biometric hand readers and coded card slots bolted to thick iron door frames. Sensors monitor temperature, moisture, vibrations

and dust particles in the air.

It's little wonder that Ottawa has staked out the facility as headquarters in the event of disasters — either man-made or natural — or that the provincial government has a deal to spirit key officials to safety. There is enough food and water for seven days. Cots and blankets and chemical toilets are ready. Cube caters to about 400 clients, who have access 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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