

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN

British Columbia

**Metro office
 vacancy among
 lowest in N.A.**

The overall Metro Vancouver office vacancy rate is among the lowest in North America and the second lowest in Western Canada, behind smaller Regina and tied with Winnipeg.

And an international survey by **Avison Young** notes the Metro office market is "showing signs of improvement."

Cushman & Wakefield reports that regional office vacancies rose to 8.4 per cent in the second quarter from 7.9 per cent three months earlier, while **CB Richard Ellis** pegs the current vacancy rate at 10.1 per cent.

Avison Young estimates Metro Vancouver downtown office vacancies at 5.1 per cent, with suburban vacancies at 11.1 per cent.

Some suburban markets are seeing higher demand, however.

Darrell Hurst, a principal in Avison Young's Vancouver office, points to Surrey.

"It's one of the tightest markets in all of Metro Vancouver," he said, noting that the three best office buildings in the marketplace - the Central City tower, Station Tower and Guildford Corporate Centre - are fully leased. "If there was availability in any of those three buildings, virtually of any size, I think it would be leased very quickly."

Another suburban market brighter than the regional picture is North Vancouver, where two recent transactions and projects proposed by **GWL Realty Advisors Inc.** and **Citimark Development Corp.** on Dollarton Highway highlight the opportunities.

In all, Metro developers are expected to add 600,000 square feet of new office space this year, but no new downtown office towers are expected until at least 2013, Avison Young forecasts.

**First six-storey
 wood-frame starts**

The first six-storey residential wood-frame building in B.C. has broken ground in Richmond.

Work on Remy, a 188-unit affordable housing project designed by **Patrick Cotter Architect Ltd.**, started in June.

The development uses cross-laminated timbers (CLTs) to reduce the effect of shrinkage, which can trim as much as six inches from buildings made with standard dimensioned lumber. The risk that shrinkage poses on the stability of larger wood-frame structures pointed the firm to CLT, a manufactured wood product that's been used to great success in Europe.

"We've been able to reduce the shrinkage in the building down to equivalent with a three-storey building," said principal **Patrick Cotter**, who is planning similar projects for Surrey and Langley. "They'll actually perform better than a typical four-storey building."

Oscar Faoro, a technical adviser with the **Canadian Wood Council**, said the timbers could displace concrete, steel and wood in some construction projects, as well as open up export opportunities.

**First Capital plans
 mixed-use malls**

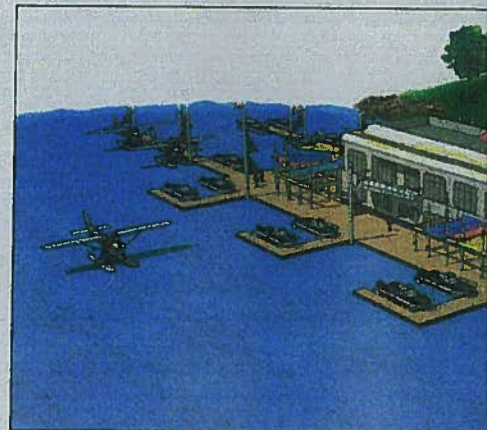
Canada's leading shopping-centre developer is making big moves in the Lower Mainland with eyes on what will be a first for the company: mixed-use projects.

On June 30, Toronto-based **First Capital Realty Inc.** added the 293,000-square-foot Semiahmoo Shopping Centre in Surrey for \$84.5 million to its stable of properties.

The company already owns 178 properties across the country totalling 21.2 million square feet of gross leasable space.

Michael Lowe, B.C. managing director at First Capital, said the company's entry into mixed-use development in the province is being done with a major focus on community participation.

**Developer eye
 for riverfront**



"McBarge" included in Mission waterfront bid

Vancouver developer **Howard Meakin** hopes to "kick-start" waterfront development in Mission with a restaurant, marina and floatplane dock.

Meakin's **Sturgeon's on the Fraser** restaurant complex would include the Friendship 500 barge that held **McDonald's** during Expo '86. The 8,500-square-foot concrete-and-steel structure would accommodate three restaurants and a floatplane base with service to Victoria and Nanaimo. It could also act as a base for recreational boaters and commercial Fraser River boat tours.

Meakin, who applied for rezoning and a development permit from the **District of Mission** last month, said the project could create nearly 100 jobs and draw about 500,000 visitors annually. He also said that

**Dawson Creek
 mall refurbished**

The new U.S.-based owners of the Dawson Mall in Dawson Creek are giving the run-down facility a \$10 million facelift.

"The centre has been in disregard for years," **Milestone Communications Leonard Forkas Jr.** CEO said. "We want to breathe new



RARE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY
 TROPHY PROPERTY

GAP Building

1319 Government Street, Victoria, BC

RECEIVERSHIP

Assets of Sunrise R

Parkville,