

Premier in city to celebrate opening of PNC

Robert Barron, Daily News

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"It's a day to celebrate" said Premier Gordon Campbell at the Port of Nanaimo Centre Friday night.

"I wanted to be here for the official opening of the PNC which is a spectacular centre that will be a huge hit across the province and around the world," Campbell said, at the client and sponsor-appreciation gala event.

Campbell said after a tour of the PNC, which includes the Vancouver Island Conference Centre and Shaw Auditorium, he was "struck" by many of its features.



More than 600 people flooded the Vancouver Island Conference Centre for the client and sponsor appreciation gala on Friday night. Premier Gordon Campbell was on hand to give his best wishes.

Krista Charke/Daily News

"The stone mural (called Ravyn's Song which was built by local stone worker Andreas Kunert) reflects what Nanaimo and the mid-Island region has to offer and I was impressed with the array of wood in the centre which is important to Vancouver Island and the province," he said.

"I was here for the ground breaking of the PNC and I remember almost everyone there had to pay dry-cleaning bills because of the gravel that got on our clothes. Even though it's my wife's birthday, I wanted to make sure I was in attendance at this event. It's an exciting day for Nanaimo and the region."

About 800 invited guests dressed in their best attire attended the appreciation gala event that featured speeches from many of the politicians, businesses, organizations and individuals that took part in the planning and construction of the PNC.

Opening ceremonies for the public and tours of the facility start today and carry on through the weekend.

Coun. Jeet Manhas, chairman of the PNC advisory committee, said it was the most exciting day in his life.

"I feel great," he said, as he socialized with the guests at the event.

Nanaimo Daily News.

OPENING WEEKEND EVENTS

A full weekend of activities are planned, including public tours of the completed sections of the new facility, including the Vancouver Island Conference Centre and the Shaw Auditorium, and live entertainment on Saturday.

Lindsay Windecker, a spokeswoman for Impact Visual Communications which is helping organize the public events over the weekend at the PNC, said festivities will kick off with a fly over the \$75-million centre by military aircraft from Comox at 9:25 a.m. on Saturday.

She said the fly over will be followed at 10 a.m. by opening ceremonies and then the official ribbon cutting for the PNC.

"At 11 a.m., local television personality Bruce Williams, the event's master of ceremonies, will direct the public traffic to the rooms where we'll have entertainment set up and then the tours, which will be led by VICC staff, will begin and continue until 4 p.m." Windecker said Allison Crowe will be playing during the day in the Shaw Auditorium, David Gogo will be in the ballroom, local hip-hop dance group VIBE will be performing in the Dodd Narrows Room and the Tszinqua Dancers will be in the Nanaimo River Room.

She said the doors open at the PNC at 10 a.m. Sunday for people to see the city's newest public facility and tours will continue during the day until 4 p.m.