

Firms eye security

**Arrests remind us the threat is real, businesses say
Landmarks, malls, offices viewed as potential targets**



It's not yet known for certain whether major landmarks and office buildings in downtown Toronto were on a list of targets prepared by the 17 suspects arrested last Friday

PETER POWER/TORONTO STAR

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BUSINESS REPORTERS

Developers and managers of landmark buildings and tourist attractions in Toronto are taking a harder look at security in the wake of the recent terrorism-related arrests in the city.

"This will certainly remind everyone there is a real threat out there," said Michael Brooks, executive director of Real Property Association of Canada, in an interview yesterday. "I won't be surprised if our members don't start dusting off their plans."

The organization represents most of Canada's major commercial landlords as members.

One member that will definitely be taking a closer look at security is Toronto-based Cadillac Fairview, one of the largest owners and managers of shopping malls and office buildings in North America.

The company, which owns the landmark Eaton Centre, the most visited tourist attraction in the city, and the 4-million-square-foot Toronto Dominion bank tower complex, says it held a conference call with top executives on Saturday to discuss the situation.

"We have done a lot of work on terrorist related issues, and we do have things in place," said Neil Murphy, spokesperson for the company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan Board.

The conference call was, among other things, to discuss how the company would communicate with tenants about security issues, said Murphy.

"We fully anticipate to have a lot of dialogue with tenants and we want to assess the situation and respond appropriately."

The Eaton Centre, which sees millions of tourists annually especially during the height of the summer season, was not discussed specifically, said Murphy.

“We realize it is one of our major landmark properties, and like all of our assets, we have a highly prepared security team there,” he said.

Murphy said he would not go into specifics about exactly what kind of action plan the company had in place for security reasons.

Metro police arrested 17 people on Friday as part of an undercover sting operation alleging that they were plotting an attack against targets in the city.

Brooks said in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York, many Toronto building managers and owners had already placed security guards in their underground garages to deter bomb threats.

“A lot of this is low key that most people can’t see. You may have people in golf carts roaming around looking for suspicious packages,” said Brooks.

However, Stan Krawitz, president of Real Facilities, a Toronto company that finds office space for tenants, said much more needs to be done to beef up security at Canadian office sites.

“We thought there would be massive change in Toronto after 9/11, but that just hasn’t happened,” said Krawitz, who has petitioned Ottawa on providing better building security protocol.

“In New York you need to show ID in just about any class B building. But in Toronto you can go to the top floor of any bank tower during office hours and they won’t ask any questions.”

Krawitz said he expects to see an increase in the number of security-related questions is clients will ask.

“But the reality is, security doesn’t figure on the top five of most important things. It’s typically issues such as costs and proximity to labour pools,” he said.

Still, it is incumbent on tenants to demand from landlords that their building have good security, said Krawitz.

Those wandering the downtown core and visiting tourist hubs yesterday — including the bank towers, the Eaton Centre and the Metro Convention Centre — would not have seen more security measures than usual.

Among major financial institutions, Royal Bank of Canada spokesperson Beja Rodeck said yesterday that Canada’s largest bank would likely be reviewing security procedures because of the recent arrests.

“We’ve got in-depth security and business continuity plans in place and I’m sure our security people will be reviewing things as a result of this,” she said.

A Bank of Montreal spokesperson told the *Toronto Star* yesterday the bank is confident of its current precautions and would not be adding additional security.

“I can’t get into specifics to protect the integrity of those measures, but our own corporate security personnel would work closely with building management and the appropriate level of authorities to ensure we are property prepared and protected,” said Ralph Marranca.

Disaster-planning expert Curtis Massey expects there will be even more demand for his services following the Toronto-area arrests.

Massey helps companies develop disaster plans to prepare for any type of emergency, from fire or gas leak to an airplane hitting the building.

The good news, he said in an interview yesterday, is that the three tallest buildings in the financial district, First Canadian Place, Scotia Place, and Commerce Court west — which are also the tallest buildings in the country — have sophisticated plans in place.

“The bad news is that it’s still difficult to get some companies to take these issues seriously.

“A lot of real estate companies feel if they meet (building) code, that’s good enough. But codes only are passed and enforced typically after people die,” Massey said.

The *Star* yesterday obtained a copy of a confidential primer on terrorism preparedness put out by the Canadian Institute of Public and Private Real Estate Companies for their members in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York. It said government buildings, banks, symbolic public monuments, business headquarters, crowds, power plants, water and computer networks may be targeted in an attack.

“Terrorists by their attacks seek to prove that the political authority they target cannot protect the symbols of its authority,” said the document, which lists extensive emergency preparedness guidelines for members, especially those with high-profile buildings.

This includes assessing vulnerability to explosives, developing policies to negotiate with people threatening terrorism, and distributing biohazard kits to personnel.

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Emergency Preparedness

The Canadian Institute of Public and Private Real Estate Companies recommended several measures to its members in a confidential primer on terrorism preparedness in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York

Conduct a counter-terrorism exercise, anti-terrorism exercise, complete with law enforcement, fire, medical, and emergency management participation.

Develop a policy on negotiating with a person threatening a terrorist attack.

Distribute biohazard kits to security personnel.

Assess special needs and potential threats of high-profile tenants

Ensure you monitor any potential danger posed by extremist political groups in your area

Review crisis communication plans

Establish an off-site emergency centre to support basic security and operating needs

Conduct background checks on building employees.

Consider inspection of personal property and photo ID for employees and visitors.

Check manifests of delivery trucks to ensure delivery is authentic.

Assess the impact of potential military call ups on building staff (some staff may be reservists).

Screen incoming mail, reduce access to stairwells, limit after hours entry, investigate installation of barriers.