

117.57 S&P/TSX COMP.  
Closed at 14095.73

16.97 TSX VENTURE  
Closed at 3251.36

56.42 DOW JONES  
Closed at 13545.84

17.00 NASDAQ  
Closed at 2616.96

## Small Fort Knox nestles quietly at Saanich site

Secure storage facility  
rebranded Cube  
keeps many secrets

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When the big earthquake hits or a major tsunami surges, the premier and other high-ranking government officials — including the prime minister if he's visiting — will be airlifted into a light-industrial patch of Saanich and secured within the two-foot-thick concrete walls of a non-descript warehouse that very 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.

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 one million cubic feet 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 Info-Sure brands until yesterday's public rebranding.

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-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 magnitude 9.5 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 water bladders on the roof, and there isn't a gas line or bore hole anywhere near the place.

Hidden cameras watch every movement throughout the 60,000 square feet 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.

In the event of a blaze, there's a three-stage response depending on where you are — water sprinklers, a chemical mist in the archives section and carbon dioxide to snuff anything in the electronic storage areas.

Even hallways to offices are designed in zig-zag fashion so armed intruders can't get a clean line of fire.

Staff goes through stringent criminal record checks.

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 at the site.

There is enough food and water for seven days. Cots and blankets and chemical toilets are ready.

Cube also provides secure office and computer space for anyone to set up in the event of more isolated incidents. For example, during and following the snowstorm of 1996, the entire PharmaCare prescription system was set up inside the building after its headquarters was damaged and deemed unworkable.

Weston built the facility in 1990 for \$10 million.

A replacement building today would be triple the cost, he said.

"More than a few" people called him crazy at the time, Weston said yesterday.

Today, as the baby boomers retire and inherit their parents' valuables while downsizing into smaller homes, Weston is seizing on the opportunity to snare more of the storage business, as well as backing up electronic data ranging from personal photos and music to business



Chris Weston in the football-field-sized, 18-metre-high room filled with 400,000 file boxes.

John McKay/Times Colonist

records on the warehouse servers.

Cube caters to about 400 clients, who have access 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Discretion, service and security are the number 1 priorities in our business," says Weston, who runs the company with his wife and son Chris.

"However, we realize that in the past we have been very quiet about what we do and the level of service we provide. We can handle the storage needs for large

corporations and governments, to individuals who would like to store a single box, antique, piece of art, or computer files for as long as they need, yet ensure it is immediately accessible — or in the case of computer files — replaceable, when they need it.

"I believe our new branding [Cube] helps us to market ourselves more effectively."

On The Web: [www.cubeglobalstorage.com](http://www.cubeglobalstorage.com)