

A meeting room with a view

Cunard Centre makes the most of waterfront location

Stephane Massinon

A large waterfront event venue with capacity for up to 4,000 people will open its doors today for its first official event.

Managed by RCR Hospitality Group, the **Cunard** Centre will help bring many to the city because of its size and location, the owners believe.

"In terms of the banqueting portion, we are filling a niche now significantly larger than anything else that's available in HRM," said Robert Risley, RCR president.

The company put in well over \$1 million to refurbish the old warehouse, which includes a state-of-the-art kitchen.

"We approached the port corporation and said, 'We would like to rent that from you, fix it up and would like to do very large lobster dinners there.' They said, 'You'd have to be out of your mind; you can't do that, this is a port.'"

Eventually, the port corporation relented. The location, right on the waterfront, could turn out to be one of its biggest assets - that and its size.

"They (conference goers) don't want to be on the inside of a hotel room or conference room with no windows, they could be anywhere in the world in a conference room with no windows. They want to be on the waterfront in Halifax," said Risley.

He called the **Cunard** Centre the largest column-free venue in town after the Metro Centre.

Calls to the World Trade and Convention Centre - ostensibly the venue's competition - were not returned yesterday.

The first event at the **Cunard** Centre is a beach party for the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation.

Events booked to date include a car show, banquets, large Christmas parties, large weddings, a trade show and more.

Even with the events already booked, the centre is still looking to get its name out to the public. Risley said there's been interest in the new venue but many people want to see it before they confirm reservations.

"The **Cunard** Centre is a much-needed addition to the Halifax marketplace, allowing Halifax to attract larger conferences and events year-round," Pat Lyall, president and CEO of Destination Halifax, said in a statement.

smassinon@hfxnews.ca

