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easily. “We have different food items at a Lions game to a Whitecaps match, so the digital menu boards enable us to alter the offering depending on who’s in town,” Ramsay says. “All of our events can be themed differently. In addition, the screens show a live feed of the match so fans visiting the concession areas during the game won’t miss a kick.”

Money maker

The total project cost of C\$563 million was primarily funded through PavCo’s corporate reserves as well as an ongoing loan. Regarding future revenue generation, the stadium has a number of viable resources, with the improved food and beverage facilities expected to be particularly lucrative. “These are already a huge part of our revenue stream,” Ramsay says. “But to build on this, we have added other flavours to the menu, such as Indian food (Vij’s), and fish and chips (Steveston’s FC), which were never previously available.”

Furthermore, the stadium’s new digital advertising system will provide numerous options for sponsorship and advertising. “Local businesses and restaurants can buy into StadiumVision and advertise on the digital system, which will be a huge revenue generator for us,” Ramsay predicts.

A hotel and casino development, meanwhile, has also been planned and approved by the city. But, most importantly, PavCo expects to see a significant increase in income generated from the building itself as a result of its flexibility to host a variety of different events – from tradeshows to concerts and sporting events to conferences.

The Vancouver International Auto Show, International Boat Show and BC Home and Garden Show are all regulars on the stadium’s event calendar. For these occasions, the pitch is covered with a Terracover protective floor to prevent damage to the turf. The events also take place on levels one and two of the building, providing a total exhibition floorage of approximately 242,000ft².

But Ramsay is keen to stress the revenue generated by the new stadium will not only benefit BC Place but also the wider community. “The mandate of our corporation is economic benefit for our province,” he says. “As a result of the renovation, our estimated economic impact is now about C\$100 million a year – up from around C\$55 million for the previous building.” Local bars, restaurants and hotels will feel this directly. In November 2011, for instance, BC Place hosted the CFL Grey Cup, which sold out with 55,000 people in attendance.

TAKE A SEAT

All of BC Place’s new club and part of its new general seating was supplied by Burlington, Canada-based SEDA Seating – the sister company of Slovakia-based SEDA Sport.

Firstly, SEDA replaced some 5,500 ‘fixed’ seats with its ‘Toronto’ model chair – a style that is extensively used in soccer stadia in Europe. The individually rooted plastic seats use a gravity-folding mechanism, are TÜV-certified, highly durable, vandal-proof and low-maintenance. It’s also more sustainable than most stadia seats, using about 7kg of steel and 2kg of plastic compared to its 5kg plastic competitors.

The second and most noteworthy part of the project was the replacement of all of the retractable seating units. SEDA transported some 500 tonnes of steel from Slovakia to downtown Vancouver to create customised seating systems that fitted the existing structure perfectly. In total, 41 retractable units were supplied, amounting to about 6,500 seats. The new, up-to-25-row, fully automatic systems are unique in that they’re not only retractable but can also be lowered from 8m to 6m using motorised spindle technology. Additionally, an air-cushion system enables the 30-tonne units to be moved by only four or five people into the storage behind the seating area.

“An event like that draws 30-40% of people from outside the province,” Ramsay confirms.

The support of the people who would be most affected by the renovation was particularly important, so PavCo made concerted efforts to involve them at every step of the way. “We engaged with the teams, the fans and the community during planning and construction,” Ramsay says. Webcams installed inside the stadium streamed live construction coverage onto the BC Place website, while media events were held as every milestone was reached. “It was a very transparent process.”

So what’s their impression? “We have received nothing but positive feedback,” enthuses a clearly proud Ramsay, with the project now completed. “Our fans love it and the media love it – and the nice part is that the public regard it as an amazing design that fits the city. It’s become a new architectural icon for Vancouver.”

Dream come true

For PCL, Stantec and the many others involved, the fact that BC Place opened on time and on budget on 30 September 2011 is a big reason to be cheerful, despite the tight time schedule and the numerous challenges and limitations. “It was a remarkable feat to open when we did,” Ramsay acknowledges. “They really broke new ground.”

So much so, BC Place is already attracting attention from others looking to replicate the success. “We’ve had news crews up from Minneapolis looking at what we’ve done here,” Ramsay reveals. (Very much like the original BC Place, the Metrodome in Minneapolis is also an air-supported stadium.)

Ultimately, the PavCo man couldn’t be more pleased with the renovation of his second home. “You didn’t know just how great it would really be until it finally happened,” he admits. “Every single time I walk out into the venue, I am amazed at how it feels and how it operates – this building now has very few limitations. I’m extremely proud of it.”

And it’s not just Ramsay who’s smiling. Stantec’s principal has excitedly watched his design come to life, with what he feels is a spectacular result. “BC Place stands tall on the city skyline, poised to contribute to its quality of life again for the next half-century,” Hamming concludes. “It’s been a privilege to be a part of that achievement.” ■

Author

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