

# B Backstage

By Jennifer Brown

**CanWest MediaWorks** wanted to improve security for its employees and give them access to two distinct properties in Toronto. But it needed to upgrade its aging magnetic stripe access control system without breaking the bank at the same time.

Photos by Erin Riley

Everyone loves to hate the media — at least now and again, anyway. And with today's often politically charged headlines, sometimes it's the messengers who are targeted with threats.

That's part of the reason Richard Landry, director of corporate security for CanWest MediaWorks, decided it was time to beef up the aging access control system at CanWest properties in the company's major centres, primarily the National Post and Global News building in Toronto.

"Of course we do things that are controversial from time to time, and of course we upset certain radical groups and there are threats that surface from some of those groups so the access control system helps in securing the building. It does help keep the undesirables away," says Landry.

With employees that have irregular hours, the CanWest Global building in Toronto has about 500 employees who come and go at all hours, it is critical to have a reliable access control system around the clock.

"We have newscasts from early morning to very

late at night so we're on air until about midnight and on air as early as 6 a.m. We also rent out our studios for broadcasts and ET Canada also broadcasts out of that station," says Landry.

That means the access control system needed to be efficient and allow for good reporting capability, something the old system didn't provide.

"The mag stripe system was inefficient and we couldn't gather the information we needed — for example, if we needed to do an audit of any kind — so it was really due for a change.

# passes

"It's a [access control] complete necessity. Our society is becoming more and more violent and we need to keep our people safe and secure within our buildings and perimeter and access control is just a new way of life — it's like going through security at an airport now. We have an obligation and we have a policy to keep our employees safe and secure at all times when they are on the premises," says Landry.

The legacy magnetic stripe system CanWest was using was no longer state of the art.

"We had a very decrepit access control system when I first took over the security operations three years ago and we looked at it and decided it was too ancient — mag stripe technology is very passé and we wanted to upgrade to proximity cards. We also added an ID security system where you could get picture and other information on the [pass] card," he says.

**"Often clients have the wrong lock for the wrong door with the card access system. In a case like that, the locksmith didn't qualify the use before putting it in."**

With the two Toronto CanWest properties located fairly close together, and with employees from both sites occasionally requiring access to both buildings, there was also a need to have one card work in both locations.

"We have Global employees working out of our building and National Post employees working out of the Global building — there is quite a bit of transferring between the two during the day for meetings," explains Landry.

Employees at the CanWest Global building in Toronto and the National Post will use their card to gain access

into the building and when they are granted access their photo will appear on a security computer monitor.

"So every time you use your card we know you are in the building," says Landry.

CanWest's new card access system is from Hartmann Controls in Barrie, Ont., and was installed by Reilly Security of Toronto. Landry didn't want to have to dig too deep into his security budget to invest in an entirely new system. So the challenge he put to Reillys was to come up with a plan that would use some components of the old system.

"What I was really amazed at was the guys from Reilly studied the system and found they could use certain existing components so it wasn't necessary to change everything."

Without taking a careful look at what could be kept from the legacy system, labour costs on the purchase would have skyrocketed if they had had to rip everything out.

"We kept some of the wiring and added some new where they didn't have readers. It became an economical decision as opposed to changing every aspect of the access control system, we were capable of using older aspects of what was there," says Carmine Panaro, president of Reilly Security.

"We utilized the requests to exits (a 'present' sensor, which releases the electric strike, for example, or a button on a door that you hit to let yourself out so it doesn't put the program into alarm) — anything that was a universal component and not a specific component to the system that they already had. In access control, you have your panel and then you have to have some unique components attached to that but there are some devices that can be used on any type of system, so those devices that are common to all systems, we utilized them where they were still working and therefore allowed us to keep the costs down."

CanWest wanted to give employees the ability to use one card at both sites and with an adhesive tab from HID that is attached to an existing card, two antennas can be contained on one card.

"That allowed them to use one card for both sites even though they had two separate systems," says Panaro.

Making systems work together is something installers are often asked to do, but it requires knowledge of how the legacy system could work with new technology.

mechanical devices can work together and identify for clients when the existing systems are in place that they may have issues in that the function of the mechanical hardware may not work with new electronic hardware, or, if they have had door hardware and a card access product installed separately the systems may not work well together.

"We've come across a lot of places where clients don't understand that," says Panaro. "Often clients have the wrong lock for the wrong door with

**Richard Landry, director of corporate security with CanWest MediaWorks, enlisted the help of Carmine Panaro and the team at Reilly Security when it was time for an access control system upgrade.**



"We've gone into a building and there are these proprietary systems and the clients feels they can't change because it is a huge expense. We utilize the existing systems and show them it's not a huge outlay. We make it clear that we will warranty the new components, but identify the older equipment. It's really about educating the client as to what they get new, what's remaining and what savings they get with what's in the existing building.

It's also important to help customers understand whether the electronic and

the card access system. In a case like that, the locksmith didn't qualify the use before putting it in."

It took about a month to complete the CanWest project, which also included installing some camera upgrades as well. "We just put in a new matrix system. It's attached to the access control system and kicks in via a sensor on the doors," says Landry.

The project also included some camera upgrades and card access in Windsor at The Windsor Star. ■