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New downtown spa plans to give men what they really want -- privacy

Ron Chalmers

The Edmonton Journal

Saturday, February 12, 2005

EDMONTON - Men like to look sharp -- but not to share their space in a spa, says Edmonton entrepreneur Ed Kilbride.

He and his partners are spending more than \$1 million to provide male-oriented amenities that are missing from most unisex facilities.

"Up to 35 per cent of all people in spas are men," Kilbride says.

So he expects The Board Room, on the main floor of Commerce Place, 10150 Jasper Ave. to attract many customers - and to tempt other downtown professionals to try their first facial, manicure, or pedicure.



CREDIT: John Lucas, The Journal

MANICURES FOR MEN: Ed Kilbride puts up the sign heralding The Board Room, a men's spa, in Commerce Place, near the Jasper Avenue entrance.

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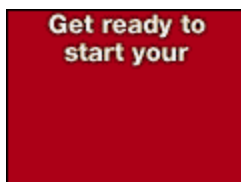
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"It's an educational process," he says. "We need them to visit us just once."



The 2,900-square-foot spa will have separate spaces for each client -- and an array of "toys for boys," including television screens, stereo music and magazines.

"It's a niche market that has not been tapped," Kilbride says. He visited spas in New York, London, and Paris, and found that they consistently ignore the male preference for privacy.

"In most spas, you would sit in a room with several other people to get a pedicure," he says.

"In our focus-group research, we found that men are not comfortable with that."

The Board Room will offer individual services such as a \$39 haircut and style. The menu also features several packages including a \$395, seven-hour sequence with a catered lunch and hydrotherapy massage.

All shaves will include hot towels -- but no straight razors.

To avoid the risk of blood-borne diseases, staff will use only new, disposable razors.

The Board Room opens May 2, with 13 employees. Already, Kilbride is planning a similar spa in Calgary, and hopes eventually to expand to Vancouver and Toronto.

Kilbride also owns Image West Marketing, an Edmonton distributor of jewelry and china.

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