A James Bond Homecoming

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Spectre, the 24th James Bond film, hits theatres this fall and viewers will follow the super spy on exploits to Mexico City, Austria and Morocco. But perhaps a mission to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada is most fitting for the British hero, or at least his fans.

The truth is: without Winnipeg there would be no James Bond. The inspiration behind the suave fictional spy was William Stephenson, a real-life secret agent and friend of creator Ian Fleming. Stephenson was born in 1897 in Winnipeg and journeyed from working-class roots to a world of international spy craft, becoming an adviser to President Roosevelt and confidante of Prime Minister Churchill.

Fleming would write in *The Sunday Times* in 1962 that Bond was: "a highly romanticized version of a true spy. The real thing, the man who became one of the great agents of the [Second World War] is William Stephenson."

Should film executives entertain the idea of bringing Bond back to his roots for the 25th installment, here are Manitoba experiences most appropriate for the iconic 007 plot points:

Chase Sequence
No speedboats on the Mediterranean. The blue-green waters are theChurchill River in Northern Manitoba , and Bond zips along in a Zodiac chasing a pod of beluga whales. He dons a wetsuit and snorkel and jumps in. Listening carefully underwater, Bond decodes the chirps and trills of these friendly white whales to discover where the bad guys are hiding out. Swimming belly to belly with beluga whales in Churchill during the summer is a wildlife encounter like no other, and Bond will savour the moment before zipping off on his next escapade.

Fight Scene
Eschewing high-tech weaponry for ancient swords, shields and armour, Bond battles a band of villainous Vikings along the shores of Lake Winnipeg, an area known as New Iceland. Islendingadagurinn is Manitoba's oldest cultural festival, celebrating our Icelandic heritage with a Viking battle re-enactment that'll leave you quivering (or chuckling).

Romantic Rendezvous
Skin. Steam. Relaxation. Bond unwinds after an action sequence at Winnipeg's new Nordic spa experience Thermëa. He locks eyes with Bond girl, Ivana Winter, in the hazy *vaporo* sauna. He follows her outdoors, where she plunges into the icy *polarbër* bath. He offers her a bathrobe and leads her to a chaise in the *relaxa* pavilion.

Cryptic Location
Manitoba's Legislative Building is anything but a typical house of government. Concealed in its design are hieroglyphic inscriptions, numerological codes and Freemasonic symbols: hidden meanings that have eluded politicians and visitors for hundreds of years. Not so for Bond. He will crack the Hermetic Code on a mind-bending tour of this architectural gem. Naturally, this mystical setting is where the double agent has a clandestine meeting with his boss M.

Opulent Setting
It's a place for sophisticated conversation and suave architecture. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is a natural backdrop for a Bond party scene. And, yes, another fight scene in which villains fly through one of 1300 panes of glass. Tuxedos and martinis blend right in at this awe-inspiring national museum that educates and inspires through interactive multimedia galleries.

Introspective Moment
Fans have noted that the modern Bond is comparatively more broody and serious. In Winnipeg, our hero pauses to reflect on his journey while staring at a bronze statue of Sir William Stephenson. The memorial—donated to the city by the Intrepid Society—is located on a patch of grass surrounded by the bustle of downtown, overlooking our Legislative Building.

There are no gigantic karst mountains or crowded streetscapes, but Manitoba's tundra-flanked coastline, architectural marvels and cultural cornerstones are intriguing locations to lure Bond and his fans. Visitors will be stirred, not shaken.

To arrange a media visit to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada on a James Bond-themed itinerary, contact the

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