
News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 28, 2002

Vancouver Agreement Partners Announce Initiatives to Revitalize the Downtown Eastside Business Environment

Vancouver, B.C. ^{3/4} Stephen Owen, Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Indian Affairs and Northern Development), and the federal minister responsible for the Vancouver Agreement; George Abbott, provincial Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, and City of Vancouver Mayor Philip Owen announced today that a safer, cleaner, more business friendly environment will emerge in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside thanks to \$4.5 million in collaborative funding among the partners.

A broad range of initiatives developed under the Vancouver Agreement will encourage business to stay and invest in the community. The projects will help create a more sustainable community and build a better quality of life for all residents of the Downtown Eastside. They include:

Neighbours First aimed at increasing the sense of security, cleanliness and friendliness of the area; a *Lifeskills Centre* and training programs for street people; a business development partnership with the business community that includes physical improvements to streets, better lighting and improvement of the security of parking lots; street beautification projects, and an integrated approach for evaluating the access, use and impact of health, social and economic services in the Downtown Eastside.

"By coordinating our efforts and working with the community over the last two years, we have laid a strong foundation for a healthy and safe community," said Stephen Owen. "This unique partnership is giving a much-needed push to economic revitalization of the Downtown Eastside and creating employment opportunities for its residents. It puts people first."

"These Vancouver Agreement projects give an important signal to residents and the Vancouver business community, both inside and outside the Downtown Eastside, that there is real change occurring in the neighbourhood," said Abbott. "We are creating a safer, more pleasant place that will attract people and the businesses to serve them."

“The primary focus of the Vancouver Agreement is the revitalization of the Downtown Eastside,” said Mayor Owen. “One of our goals has always been to develop an environment in which residents can find jobs or build businesses, and improve the environment for existing businesses. These initiatives are inclusive and benefit the whole community. The Downtown Eastside is open for business.”

Under the Vancouver Agreement, the three governments aim to stimulate economic development and create a healthy, safe and sustainable community in the DTES. The initiatives announced today will: increase business activity by improving the sense of security in the community; make the environment in which businesses operate more attractive for residents and visitors; improve the management and tenant conditions in Single Resident Occupancy hotels (SROs), and provide pre-employment skills for people on the street to lead them to full employment.

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This news release and backgrounders are available on the following Web sites:

www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/dtes
www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/vancouver-agreement/
www.wd.gc.ca

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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City of Vancouver:	Catherine Clement	(604) 873-7270

BACKGROUNDER

VANCOUVER AGREEMENT ³/₄ DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE REVITALIZATION

Neighbours First \$685,500

This three-year program will provide resources to: train, equip, and supervise volunteers to patrol the streets of the DTES; provide training for residents and businesses about security, safety, and hospitality; provide visitors with greater access to information such as maps and alerts on sensible security for those with vehicles; promote and market the DTES to increase awareness among visitors and residents of the changing environment in the area.

Neighbours First is a program funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada and the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services under the federal-provincial Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA), the City of Vancouver, EasyPark, Gastown Business Improvement Society, Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society, Chinese Community Policing Centre, and United We Can.

Community Historical Markers \$200,000

The *Community Historical Markers* project, which provides street people with pre-employment training and work experience, is the continuation of the successful, joint Western Economic Diversification-City of Vancouver Historical Markers pilot project that hired street people to take health and life skills training and learn mosaic-making. There are already 17 historical markers embedded in the sidewalks of the Downtown Eastside, celebrating historical and cultural events. The historical markers play an important role in revitalizing the DTES through physical improvements to the environment, making the neighbourhood more attractive for residents and tourists.

Business Development in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside \$2,570,000

The City of Vancouver, Western Economic Diversification Canada, EasyPark and the community are partnering on improvements designed to make tourists, shoppers, businesses and their employees feel safer. These actions include enhancing street lighting in Victory Square, physical improvements to streets consistent with heritage needs to enhance tourism, and upgrading the security of parking lots.

These improvements build on a recent announcement under the same initiative that saw the installation of 90 new vintage-style lamp-posts in Chinatown.

Economic revitalization efforts will also support: the design and testing of courses to teach better management to operators and managers of SROS; pre-employment skills development to their tenants to reduce the impact of haphazard behaviour on the street by many residents; the development of local economic capacity by assessing the training needs of residents interested in owning or managing a business and helping residents develop proposals for new business.

Lifeskills Centre \$612,000

Western Economic Diversification Canada provided \$550,800 in non-repayable funding to a non-profit society, the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation, to enable the non-profit society to renovate the space for a life skills centre in the Downtown Eastside. The centre provides pre-employment skills for people on the street, opportunities for them to contact health and social service professionals and to begin to develop skills that will eventually lead them towards full employment.

PARIS Application Software \$500,000

Western Economic Diversification Canada will provide \$450,000 in funding to the Vancouver General Hospital Society for the purchase of new software at the leading edge of integrated patient care. The software, PARIS, will allow patients to be tracked so that, no matter who sees them, information about the services they receive is known. These services range from health care to counseling and employment training. PARIS will allow for a more comprehensive approach to monitoring services and thus ensure that gaps and overlaps are removed in addressing the needs of people in severe living conditions. The balance of the project costs come from the Vancouver General Hospital Society, who raised \$50,000 through charitable donation.

Steamworks Tour de Gastown \$15,000

Steamworks Tour de Gastown is an event on July 17, 2002 that brings together elite Canadian and international cyclists for a dramatic criterium-style race through the cobblestone streets of Gastown in downtown Vancouver. The Gastown Business Improvement Association (BIA), organizers of this year's event, have secured a three-year sponsorship commitment from Steamworks Brewing Company as well as support from a number of other community groups and businesses, including The Vancouver Agreement. The BIA hopes the event will boost local business and tourist activity, and diffuse the perception that the area is a dangerous part of the city. Steamworks Brewing Company is the major sponsor with \$7,500 from the City of Vancouver and another \$7,500 from the Ministry of Community Aboriginal and Women's Services.

The Vancouver Agreement

This tripartite Agreement is a five-year collaboration involving the federal, provincial and municipal governments. Signed on March 9, 2000, the Agreement focuses on three main areas: community health and safety; economic and social development, and community capacity building. Partners in the Agreement have a mandate to work with the community and other agencies to ensure a coordinated delivery of programs. This includes the Vancouver Police Department and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.