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NEWS RELEASE

Vancouver Agreement partners officially open Chinatown Millennium Gate

VANCOUVER – Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, along with Vancouver Agreement partners and community representatives officially opened the Chinatown Millennium Gate today. The traditional Chinese gate was constructed with the support of the governments of Canada, British Columbia and the City of Vancouver, along with generous support from individuals and community organizations.

Vancouver Agreement partners are Stephen Owen, Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Indian Affairs and Northern Development), George Abbott Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, and City of Vancouver Mayor Philip Owen.

"The Government of Canada is pleased to help make this long-held dream a reality," said Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. "Vancouver's Chinatown Millennium Gate sends a strong signal locally and nationally that historic Chinatown is turning a corner. With the help of the three levels of government, Chinatown is opening a door to a new future, to a more vibrant community."

The 15-metre tall Chinatown Millennium Gate, which spans Pender Street at the western entrance to Chinatown, is part of a larger plan to market Vancouver's Chinatown, and to improve business and living conditions in Vancouver's Downtown neighbourhoods. The Gate is a portal to the Silk Road, a dynamic link between Chinatown and Downtown.

"The Chinatown Millennium Gate was made possible by the partnerships that are developing under the Vancouver Agreement," said Secretary of State Stephen Owen. "The gate is a milestone for the Chinatown community and a catalyst for the development of a better business climate in the Downtown Eastside. Projects such as this go hand in hand with addressing the social, economic development, and health related issues facing the community."

"Today is a celebration of the important contributions of the Chinese community in the past, present, and future development of British Columbia," said Minister George Abbott. "The Millennium Gate is part of our commitment to support a healthy, sustainable, and successful community for all who live and work here."

"This magnificent gate is another important step in the revitalization of historic Chinatown, and also the larger Downtown Eastside neighbourhood," said Mayor Philip Owen. "It also illustrates, once again, the Vancouver Agreement's integrated approach to rebuilding this area."

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“The gate is a symbol to remind us of the history of Chinese people in Canada, and an inspiration for the future of our community,” said Tong Yuet, President of Vancouver Chinatown Millennium Society. “I would like to thank Heritage Vancouver Society for their support in creating this magnificent icon of the future we hope to have.”

Funding for the Chinatown Millennium Gate came from the City of Vancouver (\$300,000), the federal government (\$250,000), the provincial government (\$200,000), and private donations (\$300,000).

Vancouver Agreement partners have also undertaken a series of economic development initiatives in the Downtown Eastside including improved street lighting in Chinatown and Victory Square, enhancements to heritage sites, parking lot upgrades and a program to increase the sense of safety and security in the area.

The Vancouver Agreement is a five-year collaboration involving the federal, provincial and municipal governments. Signed in March 2000, the Agreement focuses on three main areas: community health and safety; economic and social development; and community capacity building.

Most of the federal-provincial funding for the Chinatown Millennium Gate was provided under the Canada/British Columbia Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA). WEPA is a joint, multi-million-dollar agreement to encourage economic development in British Columbia. The federal department of Western Economic Diversification Canada and the provincial Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise are the lead agencies for the partnership agreement.

Media Contacts:

Vancouver Agreement	Trish Webb	604-209-8901
Federal government	Joanne Meyer	604-664-9220
Provincial government	Marisa Adair	250-387-4089
City of Vancouver	Catherine Clement	604-873-7270