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February 26, 2008

The Hon. Gordon Campbell
Premier of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
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Dear Premier Campbell:

Great Beginnings: Old Streets, New Pride

British Columbia's 150th Anniversary is a rare opportunity to celebrate the history, heritage and culture of Vancouver's first urban areas by recapturing the vibrancy of their unique streetscapes, buildings and public spaces. The founding neighbourhoods of Strathcona, Granville town site and Hastings Mill (Gastown), Chinatown, and Japantown (Oppenheimer area) helped shape the great beginnings of our city and our province. I am writing to request provincial assistance as part of the 150th Anniversary celebration, to bring a renewed sense of pride to the streets of some of our oldest neighbourhoods.

Vancouver's founding neighbourhoods were lively and dynamic social spaces. The attached proposal is aimed at restoring their original public appeal by creating attractive and welcoming physical environments (through improvements to streets, buildings and public spaces). It also establishes a foundation for improvements to the social environment through arts and cultural activities, celebrations and street festivals.

The benefits of the **Great Beginnings: Old Streets, New Pride** initiative will be direct and immediate in these historic urban areas. Concurrent with the development and implementation of enhanced social supports being introduced by the province, these activities will focus on community capacity-building and creating new and enhanced employment opportunities for local residents, artists, trades people and others. The benefits will extend beyond the borders of the city, highlighting for all British Columbian residents and visitors the unique, important and vital roles these neighbourhoods have played throughout the history of our province.

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This initiative allows one to imagine strolling from a noisy, people-filled Maple Tree Square to a reflective St. James Church, along well-lit streets hung with colourful cultural banners, past historic building facades and vacant lots converted into community gardens, stopping on the way to admire public art displays or local artists at work in studios and galleries.

I propose to restore the physical environment of these historic areas. I invite the Province to join us and to play a pivotal role by investing in two critically important community-building initiatives: the restoration of the historically important Pantages Theatre; and the relocation and expansion of United We Can, an important and prominent social enterprise. We will be writing to you further with respect to these two initiatives and additional ideas concerning arts and culture.

Attached is a draft proposal for your consideration. The proposed budget of \$10 million will cover a three-year time period from 2008 to 2011. We want to be able to showcase our renewed historic neighbourhoods to the world in 2010.

Your contribution of \$10 million toward the renewal of these historic neighbourhoods will go a long way in helping to support the goals of Project Civil City. In that regard, I am prepared to ask for our Council's support to secure \$600K in funding over the next three years to provide for enhanced street cleaning in the Downtown Eastside starting as early as this spring.

We believe the Province can be a catalyst for bringing back the vibrancy of these important historic neighbourhoods. We hope you will use the occasion of British Columbia's 150th Anniversary to help us create a lasting legacy for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Sullivan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sam Sullivan
MAYOR

Great Beginnings Begin Again

Old Streets, New Pride

British Columbia's 150th Anniversary is a rare opportunity to celebrate the history, heritage and culture of Vancouver's first urban areas by recapturing the vibrancy of their unique streetscapes, buildings and public spaces

Objectives

- To revitalize the founding neighbourhoods of Strathcona (Granville town site and Hastings Mill (Gastown), Chinatown, and Japantown (Oppenheimer area) by restoring the vibrant and unique nature of their streets, buildings and public spaces.
- To celebrate the people, cultures and history that helped shape the great beginnings of our city and our province.

Guiding Principles

- Benefits to local communities and residents
- Involvement of local residents
- Community capacity building
- Enhanced employment training and opportunities for residents
- Sustainability values incorporated into design of activities
- Capture and celebrate the unique contributions these neighbourhoods have made to building Vancouver and the province

Approach

This overarching approach of this project is to improve the physical environment of the province's first urban areas and restore their public appeal by filling them with opportunities for positive activities. Two concurrent streams of activities are being proposed:

- Creating attractive, vibrant physical environments through improvements to streets, buildings and public spaces
- Creating welcoming and rewarding social environments through arts and cultural activities, celebrations and street festivals

The basic starting points for the project are presented below. It is anticipated that additional solutions will emerge throughout the course of the project. It is also envisioned these activities and improvements will complement the new housing and mental health announcements the Province has recently announced.

Funding for this proposal will specifically allow the City to:

- I. Recapture the vibrancy of Vancouver's earliest neighbourhoods by:
 1. restoring building facades and alcoves
 2. converting vacant lots into green space, artist-designed community gardens, temporary public art installation
 3. uncovering the historic characteristics of streets, lanes and alleyways currently hidden under graffiti and garbage
 4. creating artist work spaces, galleries and exhibition halls in abandoned buildings and vacant storefronts, by making special allowance for "interim use"
- II. Highlight the unique cultural legacies and characteristics of neighbourhoods by:
 1. replacing building awnings
 2. creating banners and murals
 3. painting lamp poles, installing neon building signs and lighting
 4. projecting lights or art on to upper-floor windows and storefronts
 5. hosting artist workshops in lit display areas
- III. Encourage positive and rewarding social experiences through arts and cultural activities such as:
 1. Creating welcoming outdoor patios and cafes
 2. Installing both permanent and temporary public art
 3. Hosting special events, community celebration in public spaces
 4. Implementing outdoor public events and markets in Maple Tree Square

Programs and activities will focus on building community capacity, engaging local residents, artists, trade people and others in employment training or participate in new employment opportunities.

- One particular project could be part of a community training and capacity program that I would like to talk to the Minister of Economic Development about. It will involve helping to relocate and expand United We Can Bottle Depot and enhancing its success as a community social enterprise.

The City is currently pursuing other important legacy projects which touch back to the cultural roots of the City and North America:

- The restoration of the Pantages Theatre into a special venue for the neighbourhood and destination theatre for the community at large
- Enhanced community usage of the Firehall Theatre and the Police Museum