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Contact us!

City Business

is brought to you by the

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Location, Location, Location: Why Businesses Choose Victoria

Victoria boasts beautiful scenery, world-renowned architecture, a large pool of educated workers, good transportation, and an attractive commercial real estate market. As a growing number of companies are learning, these and many other qualities make Victoria appealing. Now, a new study confirms what thousands of businesspeople already know: Victoria is the place to be.

Competitive Alternatives compares business costs

A useful tool for site selectors and local businesses, the *Competitive Alternatives* study is due out very soon. Begun in 1994 as a government study that offered mainly Canada/US comparisons, the project has since been taken on by KPMG through sponsorship funding. This year's edition (the sixth) will cover nine countries and over 100 cities. It includes a profile on Victoria, commissioned by the City of Victoria.

Evaluating variables

Competitive Alternatives provides a comprehensive, value-added analysis of business cost variables. These include taxes, labour, employer-paid benefits, transportation, building, and energy costs. According to Stuart MacKay, the study's founder and leader, "This study signifies a massive research effort that amounted to ten months of research collecting over 30,000 individual pieces of data."

Results available soon

The research results will be available at www.competitivealternatives.com. Also available at this site will be the new Interactive Costing Model—a tool that can answer questions and take into account changes that affect comparisons, such as fluctuations in exchange rates.

Resources to make the job easier

Another useful site-selection resource is Invest BC. Available online at www.invest-bc.com, it provides a wealth of information, such as data on labour availability and costs, education and training resources, site availability, cost of living, taxes, and economic forecasts.

Get your free copy of *Competitive Alternatives* from the City of Victoria's Economic Development Office. Contact Maria Miller at 361-0320. ●



Home-Based Businesses Celebrate Success

Victoria's Cedar Hill Rec Centre will host its fourth annual home-based business (HBB) show on February 23. The event will feature exhibitors that provide services and resources to HBBs and a number of HBBs showing their wares. There will also be five free seminars for HBBs, ranging from *Small Business Planning* to *Bookkeeping*. The show runs from 10 AM to 4:30 PM. Admission costs only \$2 or \$1 for students and seniors. For more information, call Anna Haney at 595-7121. (See also *Home-based Business Flourishing in Victoria* in issue 5 of *City Business*.) ●

Exciting Development Happening in Victoria

Victoria is growing. In fact, building activity was up a healthy 4% last year over the previous year, representing an increase in revenue to the City of over \$2 million. The increased number of building permits last year confirms that more businesses are growing and investing in Victoria. Here are some of the proposed and scheduled major developments coming soon:

* Y-Lot Project

The Y-lot at Humboldt and Blanshard streets is the proposed site for a \$90 million three-phase project. The first phase will be a \$34 million Marriott hotel. Phases two and three will include an apartment complex and office building.

* Multipurpose Facility

The Memorial Arena is the proposed site for a 7,000-seat multipurpose facility. The \$30 million facility will be built and operated by RG Properties. A public referendum for the facility is scheduled for spring, 2002.

* Upper Harbour Place

GMC Projects is proposing a 7400 sq m advanced technology office building on Tyee Road. The \$5 million project will be constructed in two phases beginning in early 2002.

* Time Share Development

A \$9 million time-share development is beginning construction at 120 Kingston Street. The 92-unit project will be developed by Trends West.

* The Reef

The Reef is a \$7.5 million mixed-purpose building proposed for development at 21 Erie Street by Mosaic Properties. The project should go to a public hearing early in 2002. ●

Electric Edge Produces E-commerce Resource

Electric Edge Systems, a Victoria e-commerce development firm, recently released its e-business development guide. The guide is written for people considering developing an e-commerce site or other e-business applications and answers questions related to website development. The guide also provides software comparisons so that people can familiarize themselves with various web technologies and software options. Electric Edge's Vice President, Bryan Stephanson says, "It is a resource that people can use to equip themselves with the knowledge they should have before developing an e-commerce project. This way they are more aware of what's out there and their needs can be better met." The guide is free at www.electricedgesystems.com. ●



VIATeC to Host HR Conference

On January 16 and 17, 2002, the Vancouver Island Advanced Technology Centre (VIATeC) will host *Advancing HR: Strategic Human Resources for the Technology Industry*. This conference is intended to help regional small- to medium-sized companies strategically manage their human resources. Featuring high-profile guests—including opening speaker Honourable Graham Bruce, BC Minister of Skills Development and Labour—the conference will address the needs of business and HR leaders, educators, and employment service providers.



HR strategies and techniques that deliver results

Advancing HR will consist of a series of seminars and workshops through which participants will explore various HR strategies and techniques to enhance organizational effectiveness. Attendees will also be among the first to learn the much-anticipated results of VIATeC's *Compensation Practices* study on reward and recognition practices. According to Shirley Vickers, conference team leader, "participants will come away with knowledge and strategies that will affect their bottom line." The conference will take place at the Mary Winspear Community Cultural Centre at Sanscha Hall in Sidney. For more information, call Shirley Vickers at 953-6680, visit www.advancinghr.com, or send email to info@advancinghr.com. ●

Etraffic Solutions Introduces an Innovative Approach to Learning

Etraffic Solutions, a Victoria-based internet communications and software development company, has enjoyed many successes. The company's most recent and exciting accomplishment is receiving funding from Canada's Advanced Internet Development Organization (CANARIE) to develop an e-learning project. It makes the company one of four in Canada to receive funding from CANARIE this year.



Developing the LLEARN project

The funding will support the development of the Language Learning Environment and Resource Network (LLEARN). The LLEARN project aims to change the way that second languages are learned—online. Working closely with the South Island Distance Education School (SIDES), Etraffic Solutions and a consortium of partners will collaborate to bring the project to life. These partners will include teachers, distance education practitioners, and computer programmers throughout Canada.

Innovative approach to learning

LLEARN is designed to engage the learner through audio, video, and various interactive components. According to Etraffic Solutions' Robin Poncia, "LLEARN will address the technical challenges that currently exist for this type of learning." Etraffic Solutions intend to overcome these obstacles so that people all across Canada can benefit from the advantages that LLEARN offers. Poncia says, "This project represents an innovative approach to teaching languages over the internet and brings us one step closer to our goal," that is, to turn Victoria into the e-learning centre of Canada. For more information on Etraffic Solutions or LLEARN, visit www.etrafficsolutions.com. ●

Industry Canada Delivers New Business Resource

Industry Canada has a new website to tackle Canadian business needs: Business Gateway. The site addresses such topics as start-up, financing, taxes and regulations, human resource management, innovation, R&D, and technology. Access to government electronic forms, services, programs, contacts, business tools, and answers to frequently asked questions are also available. www.businessgateway.ca. ●



Live/work townhouses in Chinatown's Dragon Alley signalled a new direction in heritage restoration.

City of Victoria Awarded Prestigious Heritage Prize

The City of Victoria recently received recognition for its decades of commitment to heritage preservation. Chosen by an independent jury of heritage experts, Victoria was awarded the Prince of Wales Prize for Heritage Preservation. Established in 1999 the prize is awarded to municipalities that demonstrate commendable dedication to preserving their heritage. In Victoria, maintaining heritage is integral to the City's planning strategy.

Recognizing decades of dedication

According to the City of Victoria's Heritage Planner, Steve Barber, "This prize recognizes the efforts that the City has made over the past 40 years, including the incentive programs; these programs are very successful in generating a tremendous amount of private investment, directly contributing to the revitalization and preservation of Victoria's heritage." On the significance of the award, Barber adds, "receiving this award is very flattering and we are very proud of it." ●

The Dawning of DigitalEve in Victoria

DigitalEve, a global non-profit organization for women in new media and digital technology, came to life in June, 2000. Intended for but not exclusive to women, the organization has been received enthusiastically. With headquarters in Seattle, Washington, the organization has sprung up throughout the world and recently opened a chapter in Victoria.



Boosting interest

DigitalEve has two main goals: to meet the various technology-related needs of its members, and to educate the public about the importance of women's involvement in the new economy. DigitalEve's Media and Events Director, Janice Wormald says, "Our objective, in a broad sense, is to advocate for all women who use technology in their careers and their daily lives." With these goals in mind, DigitalEve acts as a channel through which people can:

- receive and provide support
- enhance their knowledge and use of technology
- promote and/ or learn about women's contributions to the new economy
- participate in the growth and success of the new economy
- learn how to pursue technology-based occupations.

Anticipating more growth

Since its inception, DigitalEve has undergone tremendous growth. The organization expects to have over 40,000 members by the end of 2001. Since celebrating its official launch on September 21, the Victoria chapter has enrolled about 160 members and is expecting many more. Wormald says, "People are very interested in what we have to offer and I expect to see our numbers grow considerably."

Members enjoy benefits

This year, DigitalEve will hold monthly social events and offer several workshops—at least one per month. "The Victoria chapter does not charge any membership fees and there are numerous benefits that members can take advantage of," says Wormald. For example, DigitalEve provides opportunities for technological training at low cost.

Creating awareness

Of DigitalEve's role, Wormald says, "I think the most important thing about DigitalEve is its capacity to create awareness". One of DigitalEve's goals is to encourage young women to pursue technology-related careers. "We want them to be aware of the numerous possibilities in tech-related professions, and to know that careers in this industry can be fun, dynamic, and very rewarding." Visit www.digitalevevictoria.com or www.digitaleve.com. ●

New Harbour Plan to Harmonize Interests

A complete plan for Victoria's harbour—extending from the Ogden Point breakwater to the gorge waterway—gained approval at a public hearing on November 1, 2001. The plan will act as a guide for future development of the harbour and addresses issues concerning public and private access, the marine environment, and shoreline development.

Balancing interests

The plan aims to incorporate the interests of various groups, including those of the community at large. This should strengthen and retain an active mixed-use harbour, as exemplified in the Belleville Terminal Plan (See *New Belleville Terminal Planned* in issue 3 of *City Business*). According to City of Victoria Planner Alison Meyer, the plan "represents the striking of a balance among interests while maintaining the vibrancy and multi-use of Victoria's harbour".

Copies of the Victoria Harbour Plan are available at the Public Service Centre at City Hall and the Planning Division. For more information call Alison Meyer at 361-0294. ●

