

Vancouver Funds World Peace Forum 2006

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Press Release

For Immediate Release: Friday, April 1, 2005

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Vancouver City Council unanimously embraced the World Peace Forum 2006 at Thursday's Council meeting following thoughtful and impassioned presentations by the organizers of the Forum and numerous supporters. The City approved funding the Forum in three stages of \$50,000 each, beginning April 1, 2005.

The World Peace Forum 2006, scheduled for June 23 - 28, 2006, is anticipated to attract thousands of civic politicians, peace and sustainability activists from around the world under the theme "Cities and Communities: Working together to End War and Build a Peaceful, Just and Sustainable World". Jef Keighley of the World Peace Forum Society said "We live in perilous times. Cities and local authorities, acting with community support, can effectively contest global militarism and ballooning military budgets which starve local and regional governments of the resources necessary to provide quality housing, health, education and community services. The challenge is to coordinate the networks of civic and social movements to work towards a peaceful, just and sustainable world, city by city, expanding to nations and internationally."

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Already eight national and international organizations have planned their meetings and conferences in Vancouver to around the World Peace Forum 2006 with five other gatherings under consideration. Together with the Forum the economic boost of these major meetings in Vancouver on the regional tourist economy will be substantial in addition to raising Vancouver's international profile as a City of Peace, compassion and sustainability.

The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) of the World Peace Forum Society and the City of Vancouver Peace and Justice Committee organized hundreds of emails to Council members encouraging their support. Speaker after speaker spoke of Vancouver's positive legacy of promoting world peace and the of the critical role that Vancouver can play with the World Urban Forum in conjunction with the World Peace Forum 2006, both scheduled for Vancouver as back to back major international Forums in June of 2006.

Nola-Kate Seymoar, President of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities and a member of the JSC concluded her remarks encouraging leadership from Vancouver City Council saying "I wish to reiterate something self-evident, without peace and justice, sustainability is impossible. June 2006 offers a unique opportunity to bring together the sustainability and peace movements with a focus on cities and communities. I hope you will seize the day and that together we may hold an event that moves people's hearts and minds!"

Jennifer Simons, President of the Simons Foundation whose generous start-up grant of \$100,000 allowed for the development of the World Peace Forum 2006 proposal, pointed out "Peace begins in one's own back yard, and in order to build a sustainable world peace we need to begin in our communities. Vancouver is an ethnically diverse city and the ideal place to host the World Peace Forum to initiate concepts for the creation of sustainable peaceful, local and global community, through peace education, consciousness raising and all the participatory activities that are democratic and educational in nature. We believe that holding the World Peace Forum will be a positive step towards the kind of world we want to live in." Ms. Simons went on to say that she was so impressed

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with the integrity and level of organizing of the Forum to date that she was prepared to recommend that the Simons Foundation release the additional

\$350,000 to the World Peace Forum 2006 regardless of Council's decision.

Following the World Peace Forum 2006 presentation numerous Friends of the Forum spoke strongly in support of the City backing the global gathering including Victor Chan from the Dalai Lama Centre for Peace and Education, Lillian To - Executive Director of SUCCESS, Jinny Sims - President of the B.C. Teachers' Federation and Barry Cooke - Director of the Multifaith Action Society. The best judged 'peace flag' artwork from twelve Vancouver elementary schools, as voted on by the entire student body of each of the schools, were on display in Council chambers throughout the presentation displaying the creativity and compassion of the coming generation. But it was five students from Pierre Trudeau Elementary School who stole the show speaking to Council members about their views of peace, fairness and the future, theirs and ours.

Council chambers exploded in applause in thanks as Vancouver City Council members voted unanimously to put substance to last year's endorsement in principle of the Forum. Council's support gives the World Peace Forum 2006 the green light it needs to go forward, to hire staff, develop detailed planning in the weeks and months ahead and invite the world to Vancouver to attend the World Peace Forum 2006, June 23 - 28, 2006.

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