



News Release

For Immediate Release

February 8, 2008

SAFER PARKING INITIATIVE AND VANCOUVER POLICE UNVEIL AWARD-WINNING PARKING LOTS

Mayor Sam Sullivan proclaims February 8 'Safer Parking Day'

Vancouver, B.C. – The Safer Parking Initiative (SPI) today unveiled the first parking facilities to earn the Safer Parking Award in downtown Vancouver. In honor of the SPI's official launch and the award-winning facilities, Mayor Sam Sullivan proclaimed February 8, 2008, 'Safer Parking Day' in the City of Vancouver.

Mayor Sullivan joined representatives of the Vancouver Police Department and the Safer Parking Initiative at a special ceremony honouring the five parking facilities which have been examined by Police and are deemed to meet criteria that deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. The Safer Parking Award indicates that a parking facility is a safer place to park, compared to facilities in the same area that have not made the same effort to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime.

The award-winning lots announced today are:

900 W Cordova St. (*managed by EasyPark*)

160 Water St. (*managed by EasyPark*)

Pacific Centre (*managed by EasyPark*)

Pacific Centre North, 777 Dunsmuir St. (*managed by EasyPark*)

Pacific Palisades Hotel, 1277 Robson Street (*managed by Diamond Parking*)

"The Safer Parking Initiative was developed in response to the growing problem of property crime and public disorder in Vancouver," said Colin Brown, Chief Operating Officer of Canadian Direct Insurance and spokesperson for the Safer Parking Initiative. "Like other SPI partners, we have an interest in making Vancouver a safer city by reducing auto break-ins and improving the safety of parking lots."

The Vancouver Police Department reports that 1,300 cars are broken into every month in Vancouver and this number represents only a fraction of this often under-reported crime. Theft-from-auto not only takes a financial and emotional toll on victims; it also incurs costs to the City, local businesses and the community in the form of lost business, police resources, court expenses, and increased security expenditures. The Vancouver Board of Trade estimated auto crime cost citizens \$60 million in 2003.

“Reducing property crime and street disorder are among the Vancouver Police Department’s top priorities,” said Constable Jeff Campbell of the Vancouver Police Department. “Participating in a community driven organization, such as the Safer Parking Initiative, helps us to realize those goals.” The VPD is currently assessing parking facilities on an on-going basis and is encouraging all parking lot owners and operators to have their facilities evaluated and nominated for a Safer Parking Award.

“EasyPark manages 9,300 parking spaces and our priority has always been to create the safest possible environment for our customers,” says Mel McKinney, General Manager of EasyPark. “The Safer Parking Initiative follows best practices and worked in cooperation with our company to help further improve some of our premiere facilities. We are also working the SPI to improve those facilities that face more challenges.”

“The Safer Parking Initiative is a great example of the business community working with Police to prevent crime,” said Vancouver City Councillor Kim Capri. “As the City of Vancouver takes action to reduce homelessness and improve public order through Project Civil City, I hope we will see more community-based initiatives like this.”

About the Safer Parking Initiative

The Safer Parking Initiative, launched in August 2007, is a partnership between the Vancouver Police Department and a coalition of organizations including parking lot owners, operators, businesses and community groups. SPI’s mandate is to improve the reality and perception of safety and security in Vancouver parking facilities in order to help reduce crime and increase the public’s confidence in Vancouver, making the city an even more desirable destination to work, live and visit. For more information visit www.SaferParkingVancouver.com



Media Contact

Danica Wolfe
Fleishman-Hillard
P: 604-688-2505
C: 604-613-4480
E: Danica.wolfe@fleishman.ca

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**CANADIAN DIRECT INSURANCE
TIPS FOR CHOOSING A SAFER PARKING FACILITY**

When choosing a parking facility be sure to look for these 5 qualities:

1. Bright lighting and light colours throughout the facility
2. Clear and legible signs
3. Noticeable entrance and exit points for vehicles and pedestrians
4. Cleanliness inside and outside the facility
5. Onsite security, including emergency phones or parking attendants

Or simply look for the Safer Parking Initiative Logo!

**CANADIAN DIRECT INSURANCE
TIPS FOR SAFE PARKING**

1. When you select a place to park, choose a space that appears to be in a safe and well-lit location. Take a look at the surrounding environment and imagine what it will look like when you return to your car later. If you believe it will be dark, unsafe or if you will feel uncomfortable, don't park there.
2. Don't advertise the brand of your car alarm or stereo equipment by placing a sticker on the outside of your vehicle. This makes your vehicle easier for thieves to target.
3. Use a good anti-theft device.
 - a. Get a two-way car alarm. Most audible alarms have similar switch-off mechanisms and do not deter thieves. Two-way alarms are often silent, with an alert sent to the owner to enable them to call police if their vehicle is broken into. The ability to apprehend thieves is therefore increased -- a thief will spend more time in a vehicle if he/she is unaware that an alarm has gone off, and is more likely to get caught.
 - b. Get a vehicle immobilizer in order to prevent a thief from starting or moving your car.
4. Keep all valuables hidden or better yet, don't keep valuables in your vehicle. Thieves don't discriminate between old and new cars or the value of the goods visible. They are often robbing several cars in a day. Collect small change and goods (even pop cans) that will be a temptation for thieves.
5. Keep your car clean. Thieves expect that messy or dirty cars have careless owners who may have left valuables in the car, or haven't properly secured their vehicle.

6. If you see any suspicious activity near a vehicle, do not approach the vehicle. Notify a security guard or police immediately.
7. Use extra caution during sporting events or concerts. These are prime times for thefts in parking lots.
8. Be alert and confident when going to and from your car. Be aware of your surroundings. As you are leaving your car parked, take a look in the windows to ensure you have no valuables inside.
9. Lock your doors and keep your windows rolled up when you get into your vehicle and until you exit a parking lot.
10. If you need to keep any valuables in your vehicle, engrave your license number on any items of value.

FACTS

Parking & Crime in Vancouver

A recent survey done by the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association found that parking ranked second among factors that people dislike most about downtown.

The West End – Coal Harbour Community policing centre cites that theft from vehicles is one of the city's most pressing issues, and finds higher theft rates within commercial lots, as opposed to residential areas. The DVBI's most recent public survey also indicated that 69% of Vancouverites surveyed said they felt safe either "all the time" or "most of the time" downtown. That figure is down from 76% last year.

The Vancouver Board of Trade reported that thefts of vehicles, thefts from vehicles, and vandalism of vehicles (all in the City of Vancouver) cost the community around \$60 million in 2003. In September 2006, the Board reported that theft of autos was down 3.6%, but theft from autos was up 6.5%. The Vancouver Police Department reports that 16,000 cars are broken into every year in Vancouver.

The indirect costs of car theft include: hospitalization/health care, police services, fire & rescue services, and court & judicial processes.

The costs of thefts from automobiles are very significant and include lost time at work (to get vehicle repairs), insurance claims, and psychological distress.

There are over 400 parking facilities in Vancouver and more than 6,000 parking meters.

The average Vancouverite pays \$268 for monthly parking, while a top parking spot costs up to \$375, according to a recent CB Richard Ellis survey.