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A security guard walks his canine companion through one of Pacific Centre's two parking lots, both of which were given safety awards. **ARLEN REDEKOP — THE PROVINCE**

Safe-parking plan saluted

PRIVATE PARKADES: Five lots get thumbs-up from cops

BY CHRISTINA MONTGOMERY
VANCOUVER REPORTER

As Vancouver police scramble to reduce auto-related crime in downtown Vancouver, they paused yesterday to salute five parkades that have helped in the effort.

The Safer Parking Initiative, a joint effort by police, insurance companies and parking-lot operators, was launched last year in response to concerns about an increase in property crime and public disorder in the city, said spokesman Colin Brown.

"We have an interest in making Vancouver a safer city by reducing auto break-ins and improving the safety of parking lots," added Brown, CEO of Canadian Direct Insurance, one of the partners in the initiative.

"Reducing property crime and street disorder are among the Vancouver Police Department's top priorities," said VPD Const. Jeff Campbell.

Yesterday, kudos went to EasyPark's

lots at 900 West Cordova St., 160 Water St. and its two lots at Pacific Centre, and to Diamond Parking for its lot at the Pacific Palisades Hotel on Robson Street. No city-owned parkades made the list.

Mayor Sam Sullivan, who announced the winners, said the initiative will help with his Civil City project goals and its aims of a safe and orderly downtown.

With 16,000 cars broken into every year in Vancouver, theft from vehicles has become a police concern, Campbell said.

Using criteria developed by a similar program in the U.K., the lots are graded for bright lighting and paint colours, clean and readable signs, visibility of entrances and exits for both cars and pedestrians, cleanliness and security.

The initiative also encourages drivers to protect themselves and their vehicles by parking in safe lots, using anti-theft devices and keeping valuables hidden.

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