



Victoria Conference Centre Celebrates 20 Years

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC – The Victoria Conference Centre, BC's second largest convention facility, opened its doors 20 years ago this week. Celebrating two decades of hosting conferences, meetings, and tradeshows, the VCC has hosted 6,495 events generating more than \$670 million in estimated economic impact for Victoria.

"Twenty years ago, Victoria City Council had the foresight to invest in this facility to capture a share of national conference business," said Mayor Dean Fortin. "I am pleased that in 2007 Council recognized the opportunity for expansion of this successful enterprise with the acquisition of the Crystal Garden, and made an \$8 million investment to bring increased conference business to the City."

"Over the past two decades the Victoria Conference Centre has earned its place as a national leader in hosting major conferences, meetings and exhibitions," noted Jocelyn Jenkyns, VCC General Manager. "The VCC's success is directly related to a diverse business mix with particular focus on professional associations which must continue to meet despite economic conditions, based on their charters or bylaws. We are ramping up our sales and marketing activities to deliver more delegates to the city and the related hotel room nights and direct spending into our local economy."

Hosting more than 250 events per year, the VCC welcomes delegates from all over the world. In 2008, the VCC hosted 262 events and generated more than \$50 million in direct delegate spending for Victoria. With the Crystal Garden expansion, the VCC offers a total of nearly 75,000 square feet of function space.

In uncertain economic times, a conference centre can be a key economic driver for the community. Conference centre clients are business travellers, as opposed to leisure travellers, or tourists. In times when our local tourism industry is experiencing setbacks, conference centre business can provide a real boon to the hospitality industry, suppliers, and the workers they employ. Conference delegates often fill hotel rooms during the shoulder season and mid-week travel when leisure travel is traditionally low. In addition, many conferences are booked years in advance, and as such are less susceptible to short-term economic fluctuations. Conference delegates tend to spend, on average, \$450 per day.

Since 1989, the Victoria Conference Centre has built a solid reputation as a top-notch facility for meetings, conventions and tradeshows. In 2008, the VCC hosted the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) congress, a prestigious conference for international conference organizers and industry leaders. The ICCA congress had never been held in Canada before and was the culmination of five years of focus in the international meetings market. The benefits of hosting this event will result in increased international conference business for the city.

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For More Information:

Jocelyn Jenkyns
General Manager, Victoria Conference Centre
Cel: 250.704.6957

Katie Josephson
Director, Corporate Communications
Tel: 250.361.0210
Cel: 250.217.8343

[Backgrounder attached](#)



BACKGROUND

About the Victoria Conference Centre - 20 Facts for 20 Years

1. In 20 Years at the VCC: 6,495 events, 2,568,577 delegate days, and \$672 million in economic impact.
2. The VCC was built on the original parking lot of the Empress Hotel. Bawlf Cooper Associates were the successful architects and Nicholas R. Bawlf's design won a Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia Medal for Excellence.
3. First International Event: The International Bear Association's 8th Annual Convention was held on February 20th, 1989, just days after the VCC opened its doors.
4. Most serene event: International Pranic Healers who practiced meditative yoga in the courtyard on breaks.
5. Largest Event: Northwest Math Conference in October of 2006 (1,700 people).
6. Most Creative Configuration: To accommodate up to 1,500 delegates, the VCC acquired glass and steel courtyard pavilions to convert both courtyard levels into function space for the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography in 2006.
7. Royal visits to the VCC include Prince Philip, Prince Andrew and Queen Noor of Jordan.
8. 986,187 guests have been served at VCC since 1989 which amounts to the entire population of the City of Victoria visiting the facility 12.5 times.
9. VCC celebrity encounters include: Pamela Anderson, Kid Rock, Robin Williams, Wayne Gretzky, Al Gore, Robert Redford, Kiefer Sutherland, Jason Priestly, Trailer Park Boys, Merv Griffin, Ed McMahon, Michael Buble, Josh Groban and Justin Trudeau.
10. 1,267,703 cups of coffee have been served in the first 20 years.
11. The VCC hosted the prestigious International Congress and Convention Association congress in 2008.
12. "Wildest" VCC discovery: a cougar in the parkade.
13. Most notable mix up: delegates and meeting planners convening at VCC when they were supposed to be at their conference at the Vancouver Convention Centre.
14. The Crystal Garden facility opened in 1925 as a salt water swimming pool and tea garden.
15. Johnny Weissmuller, five time Olympic Gold Medalist and star of "Tarzan" fame, set the 100 yard swimming record at Crystal Garden in 1925 and was celebrated as the "Human Hydroplane".
16. Native artwork within the VCC represents the nations of Vancouver Island: Kwagiulth, Nuu-chah-nulth, Haida and Coast Salish.
17. At the time of the VCC opening, City of Victoria Mayor was Gretchen Brewin.
18. Strangest item ever found at the VCC: a gun in a paper bag in the VIP garage. It turned out to be a hidden murder weapon.
19. The Crystal Garden expansion was built to conform to LEED for Commercial Interiors standards.
20. Most popular evening haunt for conference goers: The Fairmont Empress' famed Bengal Lounge.

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