

# Tax cash spent on Downtown Eastside

## INVESTMENT: Funds used to attract new business to area

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Josh Peddie is building a life for himself, one gingerbread house at a time. The 17-year-old high-school dropout is training to be a cook at a unique hands-on cafe near the notorious Oppenheimer Park in East Vancouver.

The Cook Studio Cafe is one of 25 recipients of funds under the Vancouver Agreement, which disclosed last week how it spent almost \$20 million of federal and provincial tax dollars on the Downtown Eastside.

"This program is really good," said Peddie. "I love it. You meet new people coming in and out. I had nothing else to do with my time."

Cafe manager Ted Klaver said most of his kids show up on time and are eager to learn basic cooking skills that they can turn into a job or further training. "Everyone thinks everybody down here is at risk," said Klaver. "They're just young people who need a little guidance."

The cafe is using the \$18,000 it's getting from the funding program to



Josh Peddie, 17, an aspiring chef at the Cook Studio Cafe located in east Vancouver on Powell Street. KIM STALLKNECHT — THE PROVINCE

expand its catering business.

Another recipient is the Fast Track to Employment program, which is getting \$191,400 to expand a web portal connecting the Downtown Eastside to the world of commerce.

Fast Track's David LePage said a major Vancouver law firm is buying its stationery from Mills Basics on Clark Drive, which has taken on five people in their warehouse.

"It helps businesses to target the buying of everyday goods and services to businesses who hire or are located in the Downtown Eastside," said LePage. "If you're going to spend the same, and you get the same business value, you're going to create a social value as well."

At 390 Main St., the City of Van-

couver is turning the former Four Corners Bank into the business hub for the Downtown Eastside to try to attract investment and create jobs for locals. Senior planner Nathan Edelman said it's hoped the centre, which is undergoing a \$600,000 renovation, will create 2,000 jobs for local residents.

"We're trying to use the purchasing power of the private sector and government to create real jobs for inner-city and aboriginal residents."

Edelman said there should be numerous job opportunities from the Woodward's redevelopment, the Vancouver Convention Centre expansion and the 2010 Winter Olympics.

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## Addiction programs well funded

Aboriginal and drug addiction programs are the main recipients in a \$20-million fund for the Downtown Eastside.

A list of 25 recipients from the Vancouver Agreement, obtained by *The Province*, shows that aboriginal housing and community projects got more than a quarter of the total amount.

■ Drug treatment, including an expanded methadone program, has been awarded \$2 million.

■ Crime-fighting initiatives, including a crackdown on stores dealing stolen goods, have received \$2 million.

■ More than \$3 million went to renovating the area's single-room-occupancy hotels.

■ And more than \$4 million is being invested to create jobs and keep business in the community.

The Vancouver Agreement was inked in 2000, and in 2003 the federal and provincial governments each kicked in \$10 million for projects.

Only \$2.5 million is left in the fund that has not been earmarked.

Coun. Jim Green, a longtime activist in the Downtown Eastside, who helped set up the agreement, said the idea was to help the area without the hindrance of government jurisdiction.

"The target is those in greatest

need," he said. "The idea, too, is that you can't target one part of the community."

Vancouver Agreement money is being spent on projects in Chinatown and Gastown.

"There's a whole array of different things that are done to give that community the support it needs to pull itself out of the ditch that it's been put in by previous government policies."

Coun. Peter Ladner said he wants a better accounting of how the money has been spent, so progress can be measured.

"What are the outcomes?" he asked. "Are we getting something for all this money that's been spent. Are we making any progress?"

"There isn't any evidence I can see of improved economic development. When I talk to people who run businesses down there, they want out."

Ladner said if the fund gets new money, he also wants it spent in other parts of the city.

"All this money has been spent on the Downtown Eastside, but some of the solutions have involved exporting the problems to other neighbourhoods," he said.

"There are other neighbourhoods also having problems."