

UBC Fails to Uphold Pledge to the Disabled

Despite a promise that "almost all" of the \$8.5 million gained from the UBC-Coca-Cola exclusive marketing contract would pay for disabled access at UBC, only 7.5 percent of those funds went to that purpose. More than three times as much was spent on "administering" the deal than was allocated to pay for access for

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the disabled, according to figures recently obtained from UBC.

In a 1996 affidavit, UBC's then-president **David Strangway** claimed: "Almost all of the revenue to be received from Coca-Cola Bottling Ltd. (Coca-Cola) over the life of the Sponsorship Agreement will be spent on improving access for disabled people to the premises and programs of UBC." The affidavit was submitted to then-information-and-privacy commissioner **David Flaherty** to justify keeping details of the contract secret from the *Ulyssey* student newspaper.

In fact, only \$640,000 has gone to the disabled, for several ramps and elevators, according to UBC's figures. "The disabled-access projects have been completed," UBC spokesperson **Scott McCrae** told the *Straight*. "There is no more contemplated for that purpose."

UBC's associate director of planning, **David Grigg**, told the *Straight* that much more funding is required. "We need \$5 to \$10 million more to bring UBC up to a moderate level of disability access, because 50 percent of the buildings could use some physical adjustments," Grigg said.

To date, UBC has spent \$2.1 million of the Coca-Cola money on "administration and startup costs" related to the

contract, with most of that going to the deal's negotiator, Spectrum Marketing; another \$2.4 million of the Coca-Cola money has gone to the Alma Mater Society, student athletics, and event sponsorships; \$525,000 has been spent on the UBC library (with another \$400,000 allocated); and \$100,000 went to cover UBC's 2000 Open House.

The 10-year contract expires in 2005, and can be renewed for 10 years.

In 1996, Flaherty ruled that the deal had to be kept secret because disclosure might harm UBC and Coca-Cola's business interests. After the *Ulyssey* sought judicial review in B.C. Supreme Court, the decision was overturned and sent back to the information-and-privacy commissioner for reconsideration. Last May, Flaherty's successor, **David Loukidellis**, ordered the release of the contract; it can be read at www.geocities.com/selkirkinfo/cokeubc.htm.

In his 1996 affidavit, Strangway claimed that turning over the contract to the *Ulyssey* would harm the disabled. He also claimed that UBC's business partners would only forge similar deals if they were promised confidentiality. "If the Coca-Cola agreement is disclosed there is a real risk it could bring an end to this type of funding for UBC," Strangway claimed.

Coca-Cola's western Canadian manager, **David Sparks**, was more ambivalent. According to a 1996 in-camera affidavit, he claimed: "I cannot say for certain whether Coca-Cola would have negotiated with UBC if UBC had not agreed to provide confidentiality."

— **STANLEY TRUMP**

MEDIA PARK FOR FREE

Vancouver Mayor **Philip Owen's** office gave away 72 free-parking decals to media workers and their employers this year, down from the 107 issued last year. The stickers allow individuals to park for

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free for three hours at any parking meter in the city.

Vancouver *Sun* society columnist **Malcolm Parry** obtained free-parking privileges this year, marking the first time his name has appeared on the list. Owen's office also gave free-parking decals to BCTV reporters **John Daly**, **Harvey Oberfeld**, and **Oliver Lum**; CBC Radio reporters **Terry Donnelly** and **Stephen Quinn**; and CKNW reporters **Mike Clarke**, **Renee Bernard**, **Carrie Stefanson**, and **Leanne Yuzwa**.

In addition, Vancouver *Courier* columnist **Allen Garr**; reporters **Chris Miller**,

Sandra Thomas, and **David Carigg**; and photographer **Randall Cosco** also received free-parking decals.

The *Courier's* five passes were the most awarded by the mayor's office to any English-language community paper. Mayor Owen's office also allowed 26 staff to park for free at city meters at the following Chinese-language media outlets: *Sing Tao*, Fairchild TV, *Ming Pao*, *World Journal*, CHMB, and CJVB Radio.

On May 20, 1999, Vancouver city council voted to allow the mayor's office to continue issuing free-parking decals to selected members of the

media, enabling them to avoid the hassle of ever having to plug meters with spare change.

— **CHARLIE SMITH**

EXECS MEET PREMIER

Media mogul **Leonard Asper** and the publisher of the *Vancouver Sun* and *Province*, **Dennis Skulsky**, each held private meetings with Premier **Gordon Campbell** in late June. According to Campbell's appointment diary, which was obtained via a freedom-of-information request, Asper and Skulsky were the only two business people listed for the month of June who had private, individual meetings with the new premier.

Asper's company, **CanWest Global Communications Corp.**, owns BCTV, CHEK-TV, the *Vancouver Sun* and *Province*, the *Victoria Times Colonist*, as well as several other daily and weekly papers across B.C. According to CanWest spokesperson **Geoffrey Elliot**, Asper paid a "courtesy call" to the new premier at his Victoria office on June 26 because Asper was in B.C. making a donation to the UBC journalism school.

"I don't think it would be fair to say there was a specific agenda on the part of either side in respect of that meeting," Elliot told the *Straight*.

Skulsky's 45-minute meeting with Campbell occurred on June 29 in the provincial cabinet office. Skulsky told the *Straight* that he met to welcome the premier to his new job and that there was "very little" discussion of paper's editorial coverage. Skulsky said he did not encourage the premier to place government ads in the *CanWest* papers and that there was "very little discussion" around labour issues.

"I never knew Gordon Campbell well, so I wanted to have an opportunity to go have a coffee with him," Skulsky said.

— **CHARLIE SMITH**