



CITY OF VANCOUVER

T.R. Timm, P.Eng., General Manager

MEMORANDUM

March 31st, 2005

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Tom Timm, General Manager

COPY: Judy Rogers, City Manager
Brent MacGregor, Deputy City Manager

RE: Pride Parade & Festival - changes to route and venue

One of the events Council was to consider this afternoon during discussion of the Annual Special Events Report was a proposed change in route for the 26th Annual Pride Parade and a change in venue for the accompanying Pride Festival.

After consultation with stakeholders in the West End, the Pride Society has now asked that their request be rescinded; they would like to revert to the route and venue previously approved by Council.

A copy of a press release distributed by the Pride Society explaining the reason for the last minute change is attached.

TomTimm , P.Eng
General Manager

MH/mh

March 30, 2005 - For Immediate Release

PLANS TO EXPAND PRIDE PARADE SUSPENDED

The Vancouver Pride Society has voted to suspend its plans to move the Pride Parade and Festival from its conventional route. Last night, the VPS and seventy-five members of the LGBT community took part in a community forum at the West End Community Centre during which those present voiced their concern over the proposed changes. On Thursday, March 31st the VPS had planned to ask City Hall for permission to expand the Pride Parade from the crowded Denman/Beach area to a larger space that followed Pacific Ave. to the Plaza of Nations. The proposed changes were forwarded by the VPS in order to ensure spectator safety, provide better access to those with disabilities, allow for an all-weather festival site and accommodate a 40% increase in attendance over the last four years.

“We were forced to confront the fact that those present at the community forum were decidedly against the move,” said VPS spokesperson Steven Schelling. “Moving [the parade and festival] has become a terribly divisive issue and we cannot hope to organize a successful Pride celebration without the support of the more vocal members of the LGBT community. The general consensus at the community forum was that we should postpone our motion to City Hall in order to better gauge the feelings of the community. Unfortunately, that is a luxury we cannot afford. We are four months away from Pride Week and to delay a venue decision any further would adversely affect our sponsorship revenue and the financial viability of Pride 2005. That is why we have suspended our expansion plans for this year.”

While the Pride Parade will continue along Denman and Beach, the Festival site remains undetermined. The move away from the Plaza of Nations as the Festival site has already endangered a \$5000 sponsorship contract. According to VPS president Shawn Ewing, the Plaza of Nations site was a draw to corporate sponsors because it signaled to them that Vancouver Pride was becoming a more secure investment. “We’ve always been perceived as the little sibling of Toronto and Montreal. The possibility of a move to Plaza of Nations made the sponsors sit up and take notice. We are exploring our options,” says Ewing. “Festival vendors and sponsors help pay for the event and they are unhappy with the traditional Sunset Beach site. It is only right that we try to find a new space for the Pride Festival.”

The proposed changes to the parade and festival have begun to mobilize an otherwise apathetic community. “We have been operating under the assumption that the community just wanted the party and was not willing to put in the work,” said Ewing. “People were shocked to hear that twenty-two volunteers were responsible for the safety of 160 000 people at last year’s parade,” Of the seventy-five people in attendance, twenty-seven offered to volunteer for Pride 2005 and fifteen memberships to the Vancouver Pride Society were sold – effectively doubling its membership. “It was very heartening to see that some people are willing to help us organize an important signature event in this city.” That being said, there is still a long way to go.”

Vancouver’s Pride Week runs from July 23rd to the 31st. Visit www.vanpride.bc.ca for more information.

Media please contact
Steven Schelling
Media Relations Director
Vancouver Pride Society 604.671.9827