

DOCKSIDE DEVELOPMENT

Former CEO accuses Vancity of firing him over affordable housing

Company denies accusation, but \$600-million project coming under attack for pricey condos

By MALCOLM CURTIS
Times Colonist staff

The executive once in charge of developing Victoria's Dockside Green says he was fired after his affordable housing ideas were rejected by Vancity Savings Credit Union.

Jacques Khouri, former CEO of Vancity Enterprises, said he proposed four-storey wood-frame condo buildings, rather than the taller concrete towers being built, as a way to create lower cost homes at Dockside.

The Victoria West project is the biggest redevelopment of municipal land in the city's history, now valued at around \$600 million.

But it has come under fire from Mayor Alan Lowe and others for its lack of affordable housing.

Vancity's CEO Dave Mowat said Friday the credit union remains committed to providing a mix of housing at Dockside. He denied that Khouri was fired, but said Vancity is taking a more direct role in the project it is bankrolling.

Mowat said Khouri, who did "a great job for us," was replaced by Harold Kalke, a businessman known for developing sustainable buildings in Vancouver. Khouri had spent five years in charge of the Vancity subsidiary.

In an interview Khouri said his unannounced departure was "not voluntary." He spent three months having to "haggle" with the credit union over a severance package.

"I'm not very happy obviously," he said. "I feel I've been treated very shabbily."

Khouri said he ran into a "funda-

mental disagreement" with the credit union and its partner Windmill Developments over Dockside, a planned community with 26 buildings that is expected to house 2,500 people in 10 years.

"It basically had to do with the fact I wanted to take [the development] in a new direction," Khouri said.

The project's first phase of 96 units includes a penthouse suite advertised at \$1.45 million, with the cheapest priced at \$274,000 for a 678-square foot one-bedroom condo. That prompted Lowe to call the development a place for the rich.

After a competition, the city selected the Vancity-Windmill team last year to develop the 6.05-hectares of polluted industrial land, largely municipally owned.

The city's goal was to clean up the property for a mixed development meeting social, economic and environmental goals.

Khouri noted that less than two per-



Jacques Khouri with a model of the Dockside project. *Darren Stone/Times Colonist*

cent of the city's point system to evaluate the Dockside proposal was devoted to affordable housing.

But as house prices and construction costs rose, the price of the project's condos became more of a political issue, he said. "I felt, irrespective of the rating, affordable housing was important."

Windmill, led by developer Joe Van Belleghem, was "hellbent" on more expensive, concrete buildings with higher density, a position that Vancity supported, Khouri said. Van Belleghem could not be reached.

But Mowat said Vancity has not ruled out wood-frame housing, and it remains committed to Dockside's sustainability.

"It's evolved to be a significantly bigger project than Vancity Enterprises, which is our development company,

would normally handle," Mowat said.

"We're just making sure there's a strong focus on this project and strong oversight."

Vancity, Canada's largest credit union with 330,000 members and \$10.5 billion in assets, is a leader in non-market housing, he said.

"I think between now and when this thing is finished in 10 years, there will be disagreements. There will be opinions...and we'll just work through all of that stuff."

Kalke, who has been named chairman of Dockside Green Ltd., could not be reached Friday. Founder of Kalico Developments, he is involved in developing the University of B.C. Endowment Lands and has served on various boards including Smart Growth B.C.

SNOWBIRDS DO THEIR PART

Canada's flying aces take aim at Crohn's disease

Canada's aerobatic team makes fourth appearance in B.C.

By SANDRA McCULLOCH
Times Colonist staff

Nine Snowbirds pilots, former B.C. Secret cabinet minister Grace McCarthy and about 50 noisy children turned up at Victoria International Airport Friday for a reception aimed at raising awareness of children who suffer from Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and liver disorders.

"The hope and the dream of a cure is very much within our grasp," said McCarthy, who formed the CHILD Foundation after her granddaughter was afflicted with Crohn's disease.

The Snowbirds, the Canadian Forces aerobatic team, are dedicating their show Sunday off Willows Beach in Oak Bay to the CHILD Foundation. In 12 years, the foundation has raised \$12 million.

Ten researchers in a lab at B.C. Children's Hospital are trying to find a cure for the debilitating diseases.

The youngsters assembled Friday included those who suffer from intestinal disorders, their siblings, and the winners of a colouring contest.

Tristin Ozard, 8, was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis a few months ago, said his mother, Melissa.

"I thought he was going to die," she said through tears.

The boy was excited Friday about seeing the Snowbird jets, she said, so when they flew over their house in the morning, the family ran outside to watch.

"We realized they made a heart right over our house," she said.

Kyle Mulzet, 11, was also looking forward to seeing the Snowbirds "fly up high around in the sky."

And when children asked questions about some of the team's manoeuvres, Capt. Andy MacKay explained how the two jets fly toward each other and narrowly miss colliding.



The Snowbirds will make their fourth appearance in B.C. this year with a show just off Willows Beach on Sunday.

John McKay/TC

"It's all done with visual illusion," said MacKay. "We aim to miss by a full wingspan, which is about 30 feet (nine metres). In formation, we're about six feet (1.8 metres) apart from the other airplanes."

The jets fly at about 483 kilometres an hour, said MacKay. He flies at the front of the formation and his job "is to fly good aerobatics and not hit the ground."

The other pilots' job "is to fly in tight formation and not hit each other, and that's where the trust comes from and the bond

comes from on the team." Asked about the scariest part of the job, MacKay joked that "The scariest thing I do is drive to the airport in Toronto. But for the most part [flying is] not scary for us because we practise so much."

The Snowbird crew took the children out to the colourful CF-114 Tutor jets parked on the tarmac, and the youngsters were hoisted into the cockpits where they posed for pictures.

Maj. Ian MacLean, leader of the Snowbirds, flew over Oak Bay before landing

at the airport Friday. The municipality "looks very nice from the air and hopefully not too many folks were trying to catch a nap because there wasn't too much napping to be had with the jets circling over top," he said.

Sunday's 35-minute air show, which starts at 1 p.m., will be the Snowbirds' fourth appearance in B.C. this year. They are performing about 65 times this summer across Canada and the U.S.

For information on the CHILD Foundation, go to www.child.ca

SNOWBIRDS AT A GLANCE

When: Sunday, 1 p.m.
Where: Off Willows Beach
Parking: Very limited. Organizers suggest taking public transit, walking or cycling to the event.
Road Closures: Beach Drive between Lansdowne Road and Newport Avenue will be closed from 11 a.m. until the show is over.

"It's all done with visual illusion. We aim to miss by a full wingspan, which is about 30 feet (nine metres). In formation, we're about six feet (1.8 metres) apart from the other airplanes."

Capt. Andy MacKay

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