



Canada's Oldest Chinatown to Shine With Festive Lighting

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — The downtown community has come together to light up Canada's oldest Chinatown year-round. New festive red and yellow lights will soon permanently shine on this historic part of downtown, enhanced by seasonal ornamental fixtures.

"Victoria is home to Canada's oldest Chinatown – that is something to be proud of and something we want to celebrate. These wonderful new lights reflect the important role Chinatown plays in Victoria's past, present and future," said Mayor Fortin. "We are honoured to work with the Chinese community and the Downtown Victoria Business Association so that we can permanently shine a light on the beauty and vitality of Chinatown."

The new lighting consists of a combination of 177 cold cathode, 8 watt bulbs, strung along cables that have been installed across the middle of Government Street between Pandora Avenue and Herald Street, and across and along Fisgard Street between Government and Store Streets. Each bulb has a life expectancy of 25,000 hours. Light-sensitive, the new lighting will automatically come on at dusk and turn off at dawn, daily. The ornamental lighting will turn on for the first time tomorrow.

"The Downtown Victoria Business Association is pleased to partner with the City and the Chinese community on a lighting project that will enhance the appeal of this vibrant and historical district within our unique downtown," said Scott Hoadley, Chairperson of the DVBA.

Today, the City will begin hanging over 100 red lanterns to complement the new lights and celebrate the start of Chinese New Year on Sunday. The lanterns range in size from 40 to 85 centimetres in diameter. The larger lanterns were a gift to the previous Mayor after a visit to Victoria's Twin City Suzhou, China and B.C.'s Sister Province Guangdong, China in 2007.

"The stringing of the lanterns in Chinatown not only signifies a project by the City of Victoria to beautify downtown and coincide with the upcoming Chinese New Year, the project reflects that the City of Victoria is truly a multicultural melting pot where all ethnic groups are well supported by City officials," said Kit Wong, President of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association.

"I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Mayor of Victoria, the City council, the Victoria Downtown Business Association and all the support from the local businesses and the Chinese community who have made this a brilliant and successful project. From now on, Canada's oldest Chinatown will shine in the heart of the City of Victoria," he added.

Sidewalks and roadways will remain open during installation of the lanterns, which will be completed by Friday. Lanterns were hung earlier this week on the Gate of Harmonious Interest, which was installed by the City in 1981 as a monument to the contributions of Victoria's Chinese community.

After Chinese New Year, some lanterns will remain while others will be replaced with decorative panels more suited for winter weather. Additional lanterns will be added for the summer season and again each Chinese New Year.

The new ornamental lighting is a joint initiative of the City of Victoria, the Downtown Victoria Business Association, and the Chinese community. The 17 contributing community groups include the Chinese Canadian Friendship Society, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, Chinese Freemasons, Dart Coon Club, Hook Sin Tong Charity Association, Kong Chow Association, Lung Kung Association, Shon Yee Association, Victoria Chinatown Lions Club, Victoria Chinatown Lioness Club, Victoria Chinese Commerce Association, Victoria Chinese Ladies Club, Victoria Chinese New Horizons, Victoria Hoy Ping Association, Wong's Benevolent Association, Yen Wo Society, and the Yun Ping Association.

Other enhancements to Chinatown have included the installation of 28 new pagoda pedestrian lamps in partnership with the DVBA, historic murals, decorative bike racks, the tiling of a water feature, and the refurbishment of phone booths and garbage cans with the words "Canada's Oldest Chinatown." In addition, a self-guided Chinatown walking tour map was developed, and the City helps support the annual celebration of Chinese New Year.

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