

Port authority snubbed

Municipalities 'don't want us here, not one,' official charges

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VANCOUVER SUN

VANCOUVER PORT | Not one Greater Vancouver community truly supports the activities of the Vancouver Port Authority even though port business supports 62,000 jobs and pumps \$3.4 billion into the provincial economy, VPA president Gordon Houston said Friday.

"We have seven municipalities that surround the Port of Vancouver and there is not one of those municipalities that wants us here, not one," he told a Vancouver Board of Trade luncheon. "Two mayors have publicly stated they'd rather see seawalls and coffee shops.

"We can't allow that to happen. We must gain their support and work hard with them to get them on side."

In an interview after his speech, Houston said the City of Vancouver has shown "lukewarm" support for the port.

"I think they really understand [the importance of the port] but at the moment, haven't taken any action," he said.

Houston called on all B.C. port authorities to work together to develop an integrated ports strategy for the province that takes maximum advantage of the huge growth expected in port business over the next 10 to 15 years.

"In many cases, we are competing with one another, rather than working together to strategically develop and market our ports to maximize the share of North American trade that flows through B.C.," he said.

Houston said that by 2020, the Port of Vancouver could support 53,000 new jobs and inject \$3 billion more into the B.C. economy.



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Port president Gordon Houston feels facility is not supported.

He said container traffic on the west coast of Canada, for example, is expected to increase from 1.7 million 20-foot equivalent units now to 6.3 million TEUs by 2020.

But Houston said the Port of Vancouver needs \$1-billion worth of investment to support that kind of growth and it is currently limited to raising a maximum of \$225 million under the Canada Marine Act. The act has been reviewed but no action has been taken yet by the federal government.

The \$225-million limit "is nowhere near enough and it's totally artificial," Houston said.

"There shouldn't be a cap at all because I have yet to hear of a bank lending you too much money.

"Banks look at your cash flow and asset base and determine how much you're worth. Why do you need an artificial limit on that?"