



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2005

**Burns Family Foundation Announced As The \$1 Million Donor
To Skateboard Plaza at The Forks**

Public to Get First Look at Design Plans on Wednesday June 29, 2005

The Forks, Winnipeg– A simple story about kids having nowhere to go to skateboard is the reason behind the \$ 1 million dollar donation to The Forks for the construction of a skateboard plaza.

The Burns Family Foundation, it was announced today, is the source of the gift of the \$1 million donation for the construction of a world-class skateboard plaza at The Forks.

James Burns, OC., a prominent Manitoba businessman, established the Foundation a year ago as a way to “give back to the community forever”. Grant requests through The Winnipeg Foundation are reviewed by the Burns family and two Foundation-appointed colleagues, Ida Albo and Annitta Stenning.

It was the story of kids skateboarding in front of downtown hotels and businesses that started the ball rolling on this amazing project.

“I kept hearing from Ida and others about kids skateboarding all over the city, on ramps in front of hotels, on stairways in front of offices and anywhere they could find a suitable surface. That’s when we began to talk about how this city needed a skateboard plaza where these kids could go,” says Burns, head of the Burns Family Foundation.

Burns began to do some research, looking at similar projects in other cities.

“I started reading skateboarding magazines and learned what these plazas are, who they attracted and what they do for a city,” says Burns. “Then we contacted the best skateboard park architects in Canada and got a first look at what the plaza could look like. Right then and there, we decided to make this the best skateboard plaza of its kind in Canada.”

The “decision” of where to put the plaza came next.

“There was only one place we wanted this plaza to be,” says Burns. “It needed to be central to everyone in the city, where kids from all communities could come. The natural fit is of course, The Forks.”

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[The Forks](#)

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Jim August, CEO of The Forks Renewal Corporation was thrilled to get the call.

"The idea of a skateboard plaza had always been a part of our ten year concept plan," says August. "But, it always comes down to funding and priorities for The Forks. When we heard that we had a \$1 million dollar donor, we knew that our skateboard plaza was going to be the best in the country."

Additional funding of \$238,000 has been confirmed this week from the Province of Manitoba, through CentreVenture, to integrate the plaza successfully into the parkland setting of The Forks site.

"Jim Burns has improved the quality of life in Manitoba in so many ways, whether in his role as a business leader or his work with organizations like Cancer Care and CentreVenture," Premier Doer said. "Jim is one of our province's great unsung heroes and I would like to thank him for his generosity."

Construction of the plaza will begin in August 2005 with an expected completion date of early October. As previously reported, van der Zalm + associates, Newline Skateparks and Scatliff, Miller and Murray, landscape architects, and PCL are all playing a role in the design and construction of the project.

"With such a tight timeline, the designs are being worked on day and night right now," says August. "We are looking forward to presenting the design to the general public on June 29th in an open house. It will be a great opportunity for everyone to see just how fantastic this plaza will be."

Open houses are scheduled at The Forks Market for June 29, 2005 from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Plans will be available at www.forksnorthportage.com after June 29, 2005.

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