

MONEY

MAKE SAVE SPEND

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Labouring for less

B.C. casual workers are finding it harder to get by at a time when the economy is strong, a new study says
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Reporter Wendy McLellan test drives Opus's new urban bike, the Cervin. SAM LEUNG — THE PROVINCE

Wendy McLellan takes a spin on the Cervin

It's a bike that demands a wicker basket filled with fresh flowers. And do they make helmets yet that look like wide-brimmed hats?

I was riding around the driveway of a North Vancouver hotel, but Opus's new urban bike, the Cervin, had me imagining I was cruising a cobbled street in Europe on the way to a cafe.

The colour — "creme brûlée with a sand finish" according to the bike's designer Stéphane Le Beau — is too pretty for spandex. Luckily, the bike comes outfitted with a chain guard so riding in a skirt is a possibility.

The upright frame is a comfortable change from the forward-leaning posture typical of North American bikes, and it's kind of nice to see the scenery while you ride.

The fenders and rack come with the bike, and are painted the same creamy colour. To make it even more

irresistible to the stylish neighbourhood cyclist, it has soft, brown stitched-leather handles and a matching brown leather seat.

It looks great, but it's also got potential as a commuter bike with 24 gears, high-quality components and an attractive retail price of about \$575.

Le Beau said he designed the bike with a downtown Montreal resident in mind. (We forgive him for that — he is from Montreal — but the bike will likely be just as popular on the West Coast).

"I could have called it the café bike," Le Beau said. "It's really for a city person. It's not a bike to take on long tours, but it's great for commuting or for neighbourhood shopping."

It may be time to consider another set of wheels for those little neighbourhood trips.

Urban bike sets wheels a'whirring

COMMUTING: High gas prices, green concerns have people flocking to cycle shops

BY WENDY McLELLAN
STAFF REPORTER

It's a good time to be in the bicycle business.

High gas prices and an interest in doing something to help the planet are convincing more people to switch to two-wheelers for local transportation — and bringing a new group of customers into bike shops that used to be populated by cycling enthusiasts and kids.

"We're selling tons of commuter bikes. It's a big market right now," said Chaz Romalis, owner of North Vancouver's Cove Bike Shop.

"Business is awesome. The price of gas is driving people to start commuting by bike. Sales are up 200 per cent for asphalt bikes — it's just taking off."

Romalis was one of the B.C. bike retailers who attended yesterday's preview of the 2009 models of Opus bikes.

It's the first time the Montreal-based bike manufacturer has given B.C. retailers the first look at its new models, and an indication the eight-year-old company is ready to push

harder in the western market.

After launching in 2001 with a small line of road bikes, Opus, which is owned by Outdoor Gear Canada, introduced 52 models across a range of styles, from entry-level bikes to all-mountain bikes and high-end, road-racing bikes you can dangle on one finger.

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But it was the new line of urban bikes that grabbed the retailer's attention yesterday. The bikes, which will be priced at less than \$600, have the Old-World style of traditional European bikes combined with lightweight aluminum frames and gears.

Stéphane Le Beau, a bike designer for Opus and a world champion cyclist, said he designed the two urban bikes for people who want to ride around their neighbourhood rather than drive to the shops, as well as for commuters who live less than 10 kilometres from their workplace.

"I wanted a bike to ride on the street, a perfect city bike," Le Beau said. "It's not flashy, but it has a certain style. I think it's really

going to catch on."

George Inglis, co-owner of Ace Cycle Shop, said hybrids and commuter bikes are the biggest sellers at his store on West Broadway in Vancouver.

"People are looking for a bike for the neighbourhood, something to save on gas money," Inglis said. "And these bikes look good, not the same-old same-old."

Bruce Wenting, owner of Wentings Cycle in Mission, said his customers are looking for bikes to use for short trips rather than for commuting long distances, and he predicts the urban bikes will be popular.

Rob White, vice-president of sales for Outdoor Gear Canada, said cycling enthusiasts remain a major part of Opus's market, but bike commuters are getting more attention from North American industry.

"People are turning to bikes for commuting to do something for the environment, for their health and to save a buck on gas," White said. "Five years ago, it was cool to show up at work in a Hummer. Nowadays, the cool people show up on bikes."

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Opus's Stéphane Le Beau designs his urban bikes for neighbourhood riders. SAM LEUNG — THE PROVINCE

S&P/TSX ▼ -36.19
13,167.00

DOW ▼ -139.88
11,642.47

TSX Ventures ▼ -38.83
1,976.52

Nasdaq ▼ -9.34
2,430.61

Dollar ▲ +0.57
94.09¢ US