



<b>Organization</b>	Spa Dog
<b>Region</b>	Vancouver, BC
<b>Area of impact</b>	Energy and environment
<b>Type of investment</b>	Microloan

---

## **It's a Dog's Life: Vancity supports Spa Dog organic grooming studio**

Many people consider their dog to be a member of their family. From organic treats to dog walkers, play dates to belly rubs, it truly is a dog's life. It was this fact that led animal lovers Adam Coladipietro and Hilary Barchash to open Spa Dog, an organic dog grooming studio just off Commercial Drive.

"People are treating their dogs with so much care these days, so why not offer them a grooming studio that takes that same approach," says Hilary. "We make all of our own products, from shampoos to toothpaste, and we test everything on ourselves first—we would never test on animals!"

Adam and Hilary have also reused, repurposed and recycled whenever possible. Their shampoo bottles are made from 100 per cent post-consumer recycled plastic, their website is run on wind power, and they compost all dog hair from their business. They use certified-organic ingredients in their products and have committed to greening their space and supporting other local businesses along the way. Such dedication made them a perfect candidate for Vancity's microloan program—the credit union invests in local businesses that enhance the environmental and social sustainability of the community.

"I am a techno hippie who grew up on a farm in Ontario," remarks Adam. "Hilary grew up in Toronto but moved to a farm as soon as she graduated high school. We moved out west for the lifestyle; we bike to work every day, we eat organic food and we love animals."

After training and working as a dog groomer, Hilary saw an opportunity to build a completely organic dog grooming business, including its own product line. "It was a long, self-educating process," states Hilary. "Our house looked like a lab for a while, with scales, powders, beakers, mason jars and row upon row of liquid in a very small kitchen."

After Adam and Hilary spent a few years building a viable business plan, they were ready to seek financing. "Most banks take your business plan as a token and are solely focused on your total debt ratio," states Adam. "We decided to approach Vancity, where I work, and we were very impressed when they showed interest in what we were trying to do."

They couple met with Bhavesh Chauhan, a Vancity business specialist who instantly saw the opportunities that Spa Dog presented. "At Vancity we look ahead two years, and if we see potential, especially in terms of community impact, we try to work something out," he says.

After being in business for just over six months, Spa Dog is averaging five dogs a day during the week and up to 11 dogs a day on the weekend. Adam and Hilary have plans to expand to a second location and to an online store to increase distribution of their product line, Black Sheep Organics. They already know they will work with Vancity to plan their next move.

"I work at Vancity but I would have approached them even if I didn't," says Adam. "We went to Vancity because they invest in my community. They not afraid to invest in environmentally and socially progressive companies. They look beyond the financial spectrum, and that fits perfectly with us."