

June 20, 2013

Mayor Gregor Robertson and Members of Council
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver BC V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Robertson and Members of Council

Re: Hastings Park Governance

I am writing on behalf of the 700 members of Nature Vancouver. As we stated in our earlier correspondence our Society takes a strong interest in environmental issues in our region and we fully support your efforts to make Vancouver a greener city.

On this occasion we wish to express our full support for the following motion which was passed by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation at its May 27 meeting:

Motion

That the Park Board urge Council to support the Park Board Governance option as outlined in the Hastings Park Governance review because it is the best option to:

- 1) Increase public access to green space and recreational use;
- 2) Transparency and accountability in decision-making;
- 3) Compliance with City and Park Board initiatives such as the Greenest City Action Plan, the Urban Forest Management Plan, Biodiversity Strategy and the Vancouver Sports Strategy;
- 4) Improve care and maintenance of all green space within Hastings Park.

The motion as amended was carried.

The reasons for our decision to support the Park Board's motion are as follows:

- Several members of Nature Vancouver attended the May 2 public meeting organized by the City of Vancouver at which staff presented the governance option recommended by the City. This was the former Option 3 which would provide for a combined Hastings Park/PNE Board to be appointed by the City to govern Hastings Park. That option would leave the Park Board restricted to a peripheral role in the governance of Hastings Park, responsible for such areas as the Empire Field. We consider that the Park Board should have the lead role in the governance of one of the premier parks in Vancouver.

Incidentally we were shocked at the conduct of the May 2 meeting because the facilitators seemed intent on stifling any constructive public comment. This seemed to be at odds with the City's usual practice of ensuring that the public is given an ample opportunity for give input at public meetings of this nature.

- We question the role proposed for the PNE in the option selected for the governance of Hastings Park. The PNE is an admirable institution but, as can be seen from its filing on the Canada Revenue Agency website, it is much more akin to a commercial enterprise than a charity and it is inappropriate for it to be given a lead role in the governance of the Park. Given the nature of the bulk of its activities it lacks the motivation to enhance and protect what could be one of the most significant green spaces on the east side of the City. We also suggest that, as a tenant of the Park Board, it would be in no danger of losing its charitable status.
- The creation of the Hastings Park Sanctuary has been an impressive achievement, and one in which many of our members have been extensively involved. We are also supportive of some of the developments taking place in and adjacent to the Park at present and proposed under the Management Plan, such as the daylighting of the stream from the Park to Burrard Inlet. Against such achievements, we cannot understand why the Sanctuary ponds are now being used to introduce people to angling. We suggest this is misuse of a green space which is quite fragile and should be left in as natural a state as possible. We would hope to see the Sanctuary being protected and expanded. We also suggest that introducing children to fishing by adding sterile fish to the Sanctuary's ponds is an unnatural way to help these children to learn about nature. This recent development indicates that current management, of this part of the Park at least, is quite insensitive to environmental objectives at a time when the City is supposed to be following a "green" agenda.

For all these reasons we reject the selection of Option 3 and we support the Park Board in its recommendation that it be authorized to manage Hastings Park.

Yours sincerely

Daphne Nagorsen
President

Cc Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Hastings Park Conservancy
Friends of Hastings Park