

COMMUNITY INPUT STATEMENT

Hastings Park Governance Review - Open House May 2, 2013

The governance review process for Hastings Park was neither open nor transparent. It ignored community voices and made economic issues and revenue generation the overriding priority for the park.

- The public waited for more than 2 years for the governance review to begin, but when it finally materialized, the review was hurried and the agenda inflexible.
- Participants on the Stakeholder Advisory Group were carefully selected. The majority were advocates of private interests, future revenue generators and supporters of continued PNE governance of the park.
- The Guiding Principles used in the review were unilaterally established by the City and do not reflect principles of good governance - transparency, accountability, and communication - but rather focus on economic issues.
- Stakeholders were not provided with the information necessary to give meaningful input, and, more importantly, were not given opportunities to consult with their constituents before providing that input.
- Information describing the proposed options was misleading and flawed, resulting in skewed data for the review findings. Two initial governance options cited the possible loss of the PNE's charitable status and a negative impact on PNE jobs. This biased the presentation in favour of the PNE option which cited no problems with these issues. Later, in a complete about-face, staff indicated there were in fact no problems with these issues in any of the options. Yet all 78 feedback forms from the March 11 Open House were based on this inaccurate information.
- The presentation of the analysis of public feedback on the 3 options is unsubstantiated and City staff and consultants refuse to reveal their data to Stakeholders. A meeting of 140 citizens unanimously in favour of a Park Board option was not included as input. The City and KPMG consultants now state that public input supports PNE governance of Hastings Park.

City staff and KPMG consultants are proposing a combined Hastings Park/PNE board with a strong commercial focus aimed primarily at revenue generation. This raises serious concerns.

- Public accountability and transparency are severely limited in the current proposal.
- Hastings Park is a public park. It is not only inappropriate but also a dangerous precedent to consider revenue generation ahead of the public interest in a publicly owned park.

- The public was assured that under the new model the PNE would be “A Fair in a Park”. City staff now claim that the PNE is no longer a tenant in the park but rather that Hastings Park is not separate from the PNE.
- What is the future of our public parks if Hastings Park is allowed to be in the hands of corporations? Who will ever donate land “in Trust” if the City violates that trust?

What does the public demand?

- We refuse to accept that “The Fair is the Park”.
- We demand that the city show leadership in resolving this longstanding issue, rather than marginalizing the local community and betraying the public interest.
- We have always been willing to work with the City in a real governance review process that is inclusive and respectful of all interests. We still are. What we will not do is remain silent in the face of blatant manipulation of processes and of the public.
- We will not go away. We are a community that cares deeply for this park. We will continue to demand that Hastings Park be returned to the citizens of Vancouver so that we can honour the original trust agreement, adhere to the Vancouver Charter, and build a park of which this city can be proud.