



THE COALITION OF PROGRESSIVE ELECTORS

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To: Vancouver Mayor and Council
cc: Vancouver Parks Commissioners

March 18, 2013

I am writing on behalf of the Parks Committee of the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE). Our understanding is that KPMG Business Consultants have been hired by the City of Vancouver to develop a Governance Plan for Hastings Park. This is a multi-use park and it is important that all stakeholders in the community be consulted. We are concerned that consultation thus far has not been balanced and that the commercial stakeholders are exerting an undue influence. While the Hastings Park Conservancy, the Hastings Community Association, and Kiwassa Neighbourhood House have been invited to participate in an advisory-only stakeholder's committee, the Friends of Hastings Park, a long-standing community group who advocate for a greater share of natural and accessible public park space in Hastings Park, have not been included on the committee. Additionally, they have been limited to one meeting with the City and KPMG, with no opportunity to participate in group discussions with other stakeholders. Similarly, while a religious private school, Our Lady of Sorrows, is a member of the stakeholder's committee, there are no representatives from any of the nearby public schools such as Dr. A.R. Lord, Sir John Franklin, and Hastings Elementary Schools. At the public meeting on March 11, 2013, parents from the Dr. A.R. Lord PAC were clearly disappointed at not being asked to participate, despite the proximity of their school to Hastings Park, which is less than 2 blocks north. We urge you to invite these groups into the stakeholder's committee, because their advocacy on this issue should not be dismissed and they should be heard.

We understand that Vancouver City Council has planned only a maximum of three meetings and/or open houses before deciding the final governance model for Hastings Park in June 2013. Furthermore, the public meeting and open house at the Hastings Community Centre on March 11 was at the same time as a Park Board meeting on the other side of town, so that Parks Commissioners could not be present, even though this concerns the governance of a city amenity which includes park land and facilities. Some stakeholders from the Conservancy and Community Association who were at the March 11 meeting complained that the process has been rushed and manipulative. There was no material available in languages other than English at the meeting, even though people whose first language is not English live in the Hastings Community; for example, Mandarin speakers. At the next planned meeting on April 25, the three options plus other suggestions from the public will be winnowed down further. This does not allow for sufficient public consultation on an issue which will affect the community's use of this park for many years to come.

Please expand and foster extensive public consultation around the governance of Hastings Park, even if this means extending the June 2013 deadline. The phrase 'A Fair in a Park', a quote heard many times over the past 11 years, should mean just that, and the governance of this important park should reflect that.

Thank you for your attention.

Anita Romaniuk
Co-chair, COPE Parks Committee