



Heritage Vancouver

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May 24, 2022

Mayor Stewart and Vancouver City Council
Vancouver City Hall
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver BC V5V 1V4

Re: The Heather Lands and the Fairmont Building

Dear Mayor and Council,

We wish to submit several comments about the Heather Lands. Heritage Vancouver was one of the groups that participated in the Fairmont Dialogue session and the follow up discussion.

The Heather Lands is one of the most complex heritage issues in Vancouver as the site holds a number of different meanings for different communities, including notably, a very difficult history for the Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation and Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

Firstly, the development by the MST Partnership and Canada Lands Company proposes the creation of a significant cultural place in the city. For several years now, the plans for the Heather Lands, and in particular the Fairmont Building, have introduced a very important way of reflecting on history, memories, and how we use the past. When you look at the Cultural Interpretive Plan and Design Guidelines (Appendix L), you get strong sense of how important the relationship between the land and culture is to the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations' communities. You get a very strong sense that the very intentioned design of the landscape, ecozones, trail and built features that are expressive of their cultures and stories will be important for everyone in experiencing the diversity of the city. This culturally relevant expression in the landscape is extremely important in bringing more local Indigenous presence back on these lands.

With regard to the Fairmont Building, we wish to provide an alternate way of thinking about the issue that is not simply the preservation or demolition of the building. As outlined in the staff report, the building represents different things to different people and is framed in terms of the past. While demolition, which staff are seeking approval for, may end the question of physical preservation, the question of the heritage that the building represents still remains. Council's decision in May of 2018 to remove the building is a significant act for those who have attachments and painful relationships with this building. It is also a significant act to the public because it was done in the spirit of reconciliation. Whether City Council makes a decision to relocate or demolish the building, there is still the task by the City to mark this social history and the events that surround either decision, unless absence of memory is the preference. If Council decides to demolish the building, how will the

City deal with the public memory of the reasons that led to that outcome and even perhaps the opportunity for the different groups with different views of the building to come together? We encourage the City of Vancouver to think more about this matter. We are available if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Yuen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B" and a long, sweeping tail.

Bill Yuen
Executive Director, Heritage Vancouver Society