



The Vancouver Board of Trade
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July 22, 2014

Vancouver Park Board Commissioners et al
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Administration Office
2099 Beach Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6G 1Z4

Sent by email to individual email accounts

Dear Commissioners:

Re: The Vancouver Aquarium and its cetacean policy.

The Vancouver Board of Trade's **Policy Council** has examined the issue currently before the Park Board regarding the current cetacean policy of the Vancouver Aquarium. This letter reflects our analysis and stance on the matter.

The Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre is a unique facility in Canada, renowned for its rich mixture of conservation, education and scientific programming embedded within a world-leading visitor attraction. It has been a civic and conservation leader for more than 58 years, serving Vancouverites, British Columbians and visitors from across Canada and abroad.

As a self-supporting not-for-profit organization, the Vancouver Aquarium has an annual operating budget of just over \$30 million, 85 per cent of which is supported by visitor experience revenues — making it the only large, cultural organization in Canada that operates without subsidy from any level of government. The organization's collection of more than 50,000 animals plays an integral role in the attraction and engagement of its visitors, while providing support for important research, specialized skill development and marine mammal rescue programs.

In its review of the economic and social contributions of the Vancouver Aquarium in July 2013, MNP LLP reported that the Aquarium generates:

- More than \$43 million in direct and indirect annual economic output;
- \$59 million from out-of-town visitors directly attributable to the Aquarium;
- \$8.7 million in annual tax revenue;
- More than \$1 million in direct net annual revenue to the City.

The Vancouver Aquarium employs 450 staff, equating to 340 FTEs — a number that has doubled over the past 10 years. In addition, with more than one million visitors annually, 75,000+ members, as well as 1,000 volunteers who donate more than 130,000 hours per year, the Vancouver Aquarium plays a significant role in the economic engine of our city and this province. As the first LEED Gold and ISO 14001 certified cultural institution in Canada, the Vancouver Aquarium is also an important contributor to the City of Vancouver's goal to become the greenest city in the world.

With recent capital investments by both the federal and provincial governments of \$15 million and \$10 million respectively, its own cash reserves of more than \$5 million, as well as support from a number of local institutions and donors such as Teck, RBC, BMO, the Molson Foundation and others, the Vancouver Aquarium has just completed the first of three phases of its \$100-million revitalization — the single largest and most extensive investment in the organization's history.

An extensive planning, consultation and permitting process was undertaken for this project over the past six years, which included a majority vote of the Parks Board to grant the additional land within Stanley Park. That process included consultation with



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more than 4,000 Vancouverites and included public hearings. To date, the Aquarium has spent more than \$45 million of the total \$100-million budget.

The current process of review, initiated by the Parks Board, runs the risk of negatively impacting the Aquarium's future ability to continue to operate in a self-supporting manner and to conduct important work in ocean conservation, research and education. Further, the likely negative social and economic impact of this review to the city and province cannot be ignored.

For 127 years, The Vancouver Board of Trade has worked on behalf of our region's business community to promote prosperity through commerce, trade, and free enterprise. As Western Canada's most active and most engaged business organization, The Vancouver Board of Trade strives to enable and empower its members to succeed, grow and prosper in the global economy.

In this light, The Vancouver Board of Trade strongly supports the Vancouver Aquarium as a leading cultural institution in Vancouver and the organization's current business model, as it clearly bodes well for its successful operation and the important role the Aquarium plays in supporting the economic, cultural and green positioning of this city and province.

To be clear, given our understanding that the Vancouver Aquarium has a long-standing policy of no wild capture of cetaceans — that for 18 years no cetaceans have been captured unless for medical assistance — and that those currently in captivity are incapable of surviving in the wild, ***The Vancouver Board of Trade does not object to the current cetacean policy of the Vancouver Aquarium.*** Moreover, we are concerned that key scientific research and advances (specifically in the area of climate change impacts on the Arctic) might otherwise be lost by either releasing existing cetaceans, or by no longer coming to aid of cetaceans in need (per the current policy) in the years to come.

Yours truly,
The Vancouver Board of Trade, per

Iain J.S. Black
President and CEO

Cc: Dr. John Nightingale, President and CEO, Vancouver Aquarium
Mayor and Council, City of Vancouver