

Keith Edwards  
Aquarium makes waves with expansion plans

Letter  
Published: Monday, September 18, 2006

I disagree with the proposal to expand the Vancouver Aquarium without a binding vote. It is undemocratic and a great disservice to the people who live here to have this continual invasion of Stanley Park.

I am unsettled by comments from aquarium public relations manager Brenda Jones, implying that people would like the animals to get "larger, more diverse habitats." This is not encouraging; the aquarium's history shows that a larger pool only means room for more marine mammals. Her comment that "we don't have immediate plans for bringing in other animals" is no assurance that they will not in the future.

What is the aquarium worried about if the public had a vote? To me, the "gem" of Vancouver is Stanley Park -- not the scar of death and incarceration of the aquarium.

Keith Edwards

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Lynne DeCew  
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Kudos for your fair and informed editorial. It's truly refreshing to read a fact-based commentary about the aquarium, one that recognizes its value to our city, and the absurd political environment in which it's forced to operate.

And shame on the Vancouver park board, panicked by a handful of noisy zealots whose ultimate goal is to destroy an aquarium that in other cities would be treated as a civic treasure. My only hope is that the people of Vancouver will disregard the headline-grabbing statements of Allan de Genova, Loretta Woodcock and a few fanatics, and instead take the time to find out for themselves what the aquarium is proposing. Get involved in the public consultation. Look at the plans, get the facts, give your feedback -- but don't let the future of the aquarium be decided by a few animal rights extremists and vote-grubbing politicians.

Lynne DeCew

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Re: Aquarium's plans to expand are awash in park board bafflegab,  
Editorial, Sept. 13

Two points in this editorial astonished me.

First is the editorial board's contempt for democratic processes -- equating a referendum with "mob rule," as in "mob rule is not the way to conduct a productive discussion on the proposal." Does the editorial board feel similar disdain for settling who governs by means of more "mob rule" (that is, more voting)?

Second, it's evident the editorial board has no understanding of the role of private consultants. Consultants are generally brought in to bolster the position that the folks hiring them wish to have accepted. This sounds cynical, but two aphorisms come to mind: "He who pays the piper calls the tune" and "Don't bite the hand that feeds you." In this case, the hand is attached to the Vancouver Aquarium, and, to mix metaphors completely, they're tootling on the pipes as well. Park board members were right to disassociate themselves from a consulting process paid for by the organization with a pre-determined agenda, a process that could never be seen as neutral or objective.

Pat Davitt

Vancouver  
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Why not allow the aquarium to improve conditions for the animals and their visitors by expanding? I know first-hand what the aquarium does to make the environment a better place, and that reach extends far beyond the borders of Stanley Park. The aquarium is responsible for organizing nearly 50,000 Canadians each year to clean the shorelines across our nation for the benefit of wild animals. Let's also not forget about its Marine Mammal Rescue Program, which rehabilitates and releases hundreds of animals, or its incredible contribution to original science and innovative research.

Angela Coelho

Burnaby

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Elaine Pope

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It is disturbing that the Vancouver Aquarium is proposing further expansion. In 1993, Vancouver residents voted in a referendum to close the Stanley Park Zoo, with the growing knowledge that keeping animals in captivity for human entertainment is far from acceptable. With this recently proposed expansion of the Vancouver Aquarium, I wonder if we are headed for an eventual SeaWorld-like venue such as San Diego's. Where does it stop? Is the ongoing aquarium revitalization project not enough?

Being ready in time for the 2010 Olympics seems simply another excuse to push through more development.

Elaine Pope

North Vancouver

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