

Crab Park Expansion and Healing Centre Info Sheet

For decades, indigenous elders, leaders, and the residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside have talked about a First Nations Healing Lodge on the waterfront next to CRAB Park. This dream never seemed like it could become a reality, but the opportunity has arisen due to a motion proposed by Parks Board Commissioner John Irwin.

Momentum has been building over the years for a healing centre at CRAB Park:

-A healing lodge was part of the 1982 vision of the Founders of the Aboriginal Front Door Society and the CRAB Water for Life Society, who occupied the waterfront in tents for 8 months in order to Create a Really Available Beach (CRAB).

-In 2000, the Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society (WAHRS) Founders incorporated the healing centre into the City's visioning for the Woodward's District.

-In 2012, indigenous members of the City's Local Area Planning Committee got the healing centre and a concept for a Coast Salish Village at CRAB Park included in the city's 30 Year Local Area Plan.

-In 2015, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority announced the Centerm Expansion Project, which involves including extending the terminal to the West.

-In 2017, the Vancouver Parks Board sent a letter to the Port Authority outlining four potential enhancements to improve CRAB Park and to offset impacts of the port expansion project which included:

1. Expanding CRAB Park onto Port Authority lands to the west of the existing park to mitigate lost North Shore views; to support equitable access to greenspace; to enhance shoreline habitat; and to expand city-wide focus of increasing waterfront access.
2. Improving park facilities, such as paths, as well as recreational features, seating areas, plantings, beach areas, and shoreline facilities.
3. Improving access and transportation to better connect the park to the surrounding neighborhood.
4. Enhancing marine habitat areas.

-During 2017 and 2018, the community in the Downtown Eastside fought the expansion of the Centerm Port, worried about its social and environmental impacts.

-In June 2018, City Council approved recommendations for staff to continue work with community, health sector, foundation, and government partners to plan for

the development and operations of an Indigenous Healing and Wellness Centre in the Downtown Eastside.

-In April 2019, the Port on the Central Waterfront, near CRAB Park, received a project permit to expand the Centerm Port. The community attempted to stop this expansion because of concerns over ecosystem impacts and loss of crab park views, but failed.

-However, in April 2019, Parks Board Commissioner John Irwin put a motion forward to be heard in May 2019 about the possible 4 acre westward expansion of CRAB Park including consideration of an indigenous healing centre on the site.

-In early May 2019, a group of concerned citizens and community stakeholders gathered to seek a commitment from the Parks Board to help the DTES community expand CRAB Park into an indigenous healing and wellness area, with a healing lodge paid for by the Port of Vancouver/Centerm.

-A small victory occurred on May 13 when the Parks Board agreed to hear speakers on the motion brought forward by John Irwin.

Ultimately, as the impacts of the colonial regime of prohibition and the opioid crisis are taking a toll on our community, talk of a healing centre is front and centre in all conversations with community members and front line overdose prevention workers. Moreover, there is growing public acceptance that problematic substance use is directly connected to the effects of colonization, intergenerational trauma, loss of access to land and resources, and the Indian Act. Waterfront spaces are critically important both culturally and ecologically to the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. Further investments should therefore be made by the City of Vancouver into the local community with a particular focus on parks, recreation, and cultural safety.



May 16, 2019

RE: Motion calling for the Expansion of Downtown Eastside Greenspace and Waterfront Access

Dear Parks Board Commissioners,

I am writing in support of Commissioner John Irwin's [motion](#) calling for the Vancouver Park Board and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to invest in the local community with a particular focus on parks, recreation, and reconciliation; and to work with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, urban Indigenous communities, and DTES residents on future planning processes for the Central Waterfront area, including CRAB Park.

I would like to express strong support for the call for the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to take actions that would:

- provide DTES residents with equitable access to expanded, high-quality greenspace;
- improve community access to existing parks and greenspace;
- explore the feasibility of a new healing center or cultural center;
- create and enhance significant shoreline habitat (which was recently identified as critical work in the City's Climate Emergency response); and
- support expanding waterfront access.

In particular, I would firstly like to urge the Vancouver Park Board to work with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to make improvements and/or extensions to CRAB Park, as that is the area most immediately impacted by the expansion. Any impact on the character and function of this park—whether its view, water flow and quality, size, or otherwise—must be considered in relation to the significance of this place, and in relation to equitable access to such spaces for low-income and DTES residents.

In the decades I have spent working alongside DTES residents, I have had more than a few opportunities to hear what is important to them. In one project, 200 low-income DTES residents mapped the neighbourhood, and [identified](#) CRAB Park as:

One of the most meaningful places ... because some of them worked hard to get it. One mapper said: 'I helped squat to get the park.... The DTES had no green space. That was one of the reasons why we were fighting for the park.'

For others it is simply, '**Really important to have it here. To see the mountains, the ocean. To walk down there and clear my head.**' '**Nobody judges you down there,**' said another mapper.

Places that are welcoming, free, and close by, where people can contribute to what happens at them and they don't feel judged—these are rare and special places that must be maintained. CRAB Park is accessed by those of us who are sex workers, Elders, Indigenous, racialized, low-income, or market-rate-paying co-op residents—all of us need spaces like CRAB Park and all of us have significant relationships to CRAB Park. As a site of activism, gathering, and reflection, it is a site of healing for many.

Thus, secondly, I would like to encourage the exploration of a new Indigenous healing and wellness center at an expanded CRAB park. Since 2011 I have been working with DTES residents who have repeatedly called for an Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre in their neighbourhood. With an expansion of CRAB Park, this Healing Centre could be put in the natural setting that it deserves. The recent [Red Women Rising](#) report calls for:

An Indigenous Health and Wellness Centre in the DTES and more Indigenous-run health programs that use Indigenous methods and medicines to address physical, mental, sexual, emotional, and spiritual harms.

As one of the only green spaces in the area, as a home to a memorial stone for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and as a site created through the activism of residents with connections to MMIW work, CRAB Park is already a healing space. The potential to expand that work and energy should be explored.

In closing, I want to reiterate that I support the motion calling for the Vancouver Park Board and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to seize every available opportunity to make investments in the local community, especially investments that serve Indigenous and low-income DTES residents who are most impacted by the Centerm expansion project.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Councillor Jean Swanson

City Councillor Jean Swanson

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Jenny Kwan

Member of Parliament for Vancouver East
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May 10, 2019

RE: Motion calling for the Expansion of Downtown Eastside Greenspace and Waterfront Access

Dear Parks Board Commissioners,

I am writing in support of Commissioner John Irwin's motion calling for the Vancouver Park Board to request that the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority work to identify further opportunities to make investments in the local community, in consultation with the Indigenous and urban Indigenous communities, with the City of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Park Board, on future planning processes and opportunities for the Central Waterfront area.

I would like to express strong support the call for the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to take actions that would:

- support vulnerable populations in the Downtown Eastside through equitable access to expanded, high quality greenspace
- improve community access to existing parks and greenspace
- explore the feasibility of a new healing center or cultural center
- create and enhance significant shoreline habitat
- support the city-wide focus of expanding waterfront park access

In particular, I would like to urge the Vancouver Park Board to work with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, as part of their Centerem expansion, to make improvements to Crab Park, as that is the area most immediately impacted by the expansion.

As the Member of Parliament for Vancouver East, and the former Member of Legislative Assembly for Vancouver Mount Pleasant, I am well aware of the importance of CRAB Park to our community. The community has fought long and hard for the creation of CRAB Park, including a 75-day occupation of crown land by Don Larson, founder of the CRAB Water for Life Society, in 1984.

CRAB Park is the Downtown Eastside's only waterfront green space. As we know, many of the residents in the community live in deplorable housing conditions. In many ways, CRAB Park is the living room for many of the residents in the community. It is a place for enjoyment. It is a place of healing. It is also a sacred place as it is home to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Monument.

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Jenny Kwan

Member of Parliament for Vancouver East
Députée de Vancouver East

When community members began to learn about Port Metro Vancouver's proposed Centerm expansion project, many of the local residents shared their concerns with me. In many of these correspondences, they say that CRAB Park is special to them. Many others expressed that they would invite anyone who doesn't understand the significance of CRAB Park to them to "go there on a sunny day." There is no question that it is a very well-loved space for community members and my constituents.

In 2016, I presented a petition calling on the government to "to conduct a full review of the Port; that Port activities respect indigenous rights consistent with the Government's commitment to a new nation to nation relationship; that public accountability is restored; and that vigorous, independent environmental assessment processes for proposed projects is re-established," and "that the Minister of Transport exercise his authority to stop the westward expansion of the Port of Vancouver's Centerm container terminal."

I presented the petition once in June 2016, with 1458 signatures. After that, the number of people signing the petition kept increasing, and I presented the petition again in December, 2016. Altogether, over 10,000 people signed the petition to save CRAB Park.

However despite this, the Liberal government failed to address the concerns of the petitioners. We have been informed that the expansion will proceed.

As such, I support the motion calling for the Vancouver Park Board and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to seize every available opportunity to make investments in the local community, especially investments that serve the local and Indigenous community members who are most impacted by the Centerm expansion project.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenny Kwan".

Jenny Kwan
Member of Parliament for Vancouver East

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**Province of
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Legislative Assembly**



Melanie Mark, MLA
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May 13, 2019

Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
2099 Beach Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6G 1Z4

Re: Expanding Downtown Eastside Greenspace and Waterfront Access

Dear Vancouver Park Board,

I support the *Motion on Notice* titled *Expanding Downtown Eastside Greenspace and Waterfront Access*. As the local Member of the Legislative Assembly for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant, the Centerm Expansion Project and the Central Waterfront area, including CRAB Park, are located in my constituency. I support the Vancouver Park Board's request for the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to offset the impacts from the Centerm Expansion by identifying opportunities that will leave long lasting benefits for my constituents

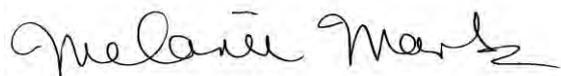
Furthermore, reconciliation is a key value shared throughout many diverse communities in my dynamic constituency. I am confident that the Port is doing its level best to consider the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action in their planning.

I recognize that the Motion of Notice clearly gives direction to include Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and Urban Indigenous communities on the future planning processes for the Central Waterfront area. As the Port explores the feasibility of a new healing or cultural centre, it is imperative to recognize that Crab Park is one of the sacred sites for the annual Missing and Murdered Women Memorial Service.

I have heard from many of my constituents about the importance of adding community amenities, including facilities that can accommodate programming for and by vulnerable populations in the Downtown Eastside. We know that these spaces of belonging have a significantly positive impact on people's lives. This motion is a great opportunity to increase equitable access to a vitally important and well-used waterfront greenspace.

I look forward to the passing of this motion. Please keep me apprised of further developments on this very important issue.

Respectfully,



Hon. Melanie Mark
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MLA, Vancouver-Mount Pleasant

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NOTICE OF MOTION

Submitted at the Regular Parks Board meeting held on April 15, 2019

Expanding Downtown Eastside Greenspace and Waterfront Access

MOVER: Commissioner Irwin

WHEREAS:

1. In 2015, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority announced the Centerm Expansion Project, which involves a series of improvements at the Centerm container terminal, including extending the terminal to the west;
2. On May 24, 2017, the Vancouver Park Board sent a letter to the Port Authority outlining four potential enhancements to improve CRAB Park to offset impacts from the Centerm Expansion Project, which included:
 - i) expanding CRAB Park onto Port Authority lands to the west of the existing park to mitigate lost North Shore views, support equitable access to greenspace, enhance shoreline habitat, & expand city-wide focus of increasing waterfront access;
 - ii) improving park facilities, such as paths, recreation features, seating areas, plantings, beach areas & shoreline facilities;
 - iii) improving access and transportation to better connect the park to the surrounding neighbourhood; and
 - iv) enhancing marine habitat areas;
3. On April 18, 2018, a project permit was approved for the Centerm Expansion Project;
4. On June 20, 2018, City Council approved recommendations for staff to continue to work with community, health sector, foundation and government partners to plan for the development and operation of an Indigenous Healing and Wellness Centre in the Downtown Eastside;
5. Waterfront spaces are critically important both culturally and ecologically to the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and every opportunity should be sought to partner with them on the potential of such spaces;

6. Based on the Park Board park provision targets, the Downtown Eastside is park deficient and would benefit from the addition of greenspace;
7. Community members have expressed an interest for an arts and cultural centre in CRAB Park;
8. The Park Board's Biodiversity Strategy identifies shoreline habitat as a key priority; and
9. The Port Authority has stated its commitment to being a good neighbour to local communities, municipalities and First Nations, and to demonstrating this commitment through its investments in those communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board request the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to identify further opportunities to make investments in the local community with a particular focus on parks, recreation, and Reconciliation, and to engage with the City, Park Board, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and Urban Indigenous communities on future planning processes and opportunities for the Central Waterfront area, including CRAB Park, that would support:

- i) vulnerable populations in the Downtown Eastside through equitable access to expanded, high quality greenspace;
- ii) improving community access to existing parks and greenspace;
- iii) exploring the feasibility of a new healing centre or cultural centre;
- iv) creating and enhancing significant shoreline habitat; and
- v) the city-wide focus of expanding waterfront park access;

B. THAT the Vancouver Park Board copy Vancouver City Council, the federal Minister of Transportation, the local Member of Parliament, and the local Member of the Legislative Assembly on this request to the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority.