

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City Hall: Keep your hands off our parks!

*NPA Park Commissioner Ian Robertson demands Mayor respect
independence of Park Board*

Vancouver—NPA Park Commissioner Ian Robertson is bringing a motion to the Park Board meeting on March 22, 2010 that he hopes will force a public debate on the independence of the Vancouver Park Board and its authority to hire its next General Manger.

“Mayor Gregor Robertson and his Vision Vancouver Councillors are gutting Vancouver’s Park Board,” says Park Commissioner Ian Robertson. “The Park Board has built one of the best municipal parks systems in the world, but this Mayor seems determined to destroy the Park Board or make it so dysfunctional it will simply die off on its own.”

Commissioner Robertson’s motion demands that Council delegate sole authority to the Park Board to select and oversee the Park Board General Manager. Vancouver’s City Manager Penny Ballem has indicated she will have a role in hiring and overseeing the Park Board Manager. Commissioner Robertson says this is a recipe for failure.

Past Park Commissioners are backing the call to maintain the independence of the Park Board. Former Park Board Chair Malcolm Ashford: “The Park Board has a long history of independence that has allowed us to build and protect our parks and recreational services for decades. I know the public does not endorse this kind of interference from City Hall. Vancouverites are very protective of their Parks System and a full public process will confirm this. There is no logical reason to change something that has been so successful.”

Five-term Commissioner Allan De Genova is also bothered by the City’s direction: “The citizens of Vancouver set it up so the Park Board is elected directly by them to run the park system. It has worked beautifully for over 100 years. They have successfully managed their budgets. We have the best run parks in North America and the hiring of the General Manger is critical to that. Why is the Mayor changing something that isn’t broken?”

“Up until this Mayor and Council, the Park Board has been independent and very successful,” says Commissioner Robertson. “If the Mayor is going to change that, they shouldn’t do it by stealth. There should be a public debate.”

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