

From: ["Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)

Date: 4/1/2022 5:58:28 PM

Subject: [Correspondence from Heritage Vancouver re: Balmoral Hotel & our response](#)

Attachments: [ACCS - GM - Letter \(Bill Yuen, Heritage Vancouver\) - Response to Heritage Vancouver's Open Letter on Balmoral Hotel \(2022-04-01\)_with attachment.pdf](#)

Dear Mayor and Council,

Attached please find an open letter from Heritage Vancouver regarding the Balmoral Hotel along with a response from Sandra Singh, General Manager of Arts, Culture & Community Services.

If you have any questions, please email Sandra directly and she will ensure questions are responded to through the weekly Q&A.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
paul.mochrie@vancouver.ca



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

April 1, 2022

Bill Yuen
Executive Director
Heritage Vancouver
309- 268 Keefer St, Vancouver, BC V6A 1X5

Dear Mr. Yuen,

RE: Heritage Vancouver Open Letter on Balmoral Hotel

Thank you for your open letter regarding the demolition of The Balmoral. This letter is to confirm The City has reviewed the open letter and understands the concerns and questions raised.

Despite the City's ongoing efforts to maintain the building's safety and structural integrity since acquisition, the decades of underinvestment and mismanagement by the building's previous owners was unfortunately irreversible.

In late February, after receiving two third-party engineering reports on the current fire and structural risks, the City of Vancouver's Chief Building Official determined that the building poses a risk of injury to the public and persons adjacent to the building in the event of a fire or similar incident. The Chief Building Official then issued an order to the City requiring the demolition of the Balmoral Hotel due to numerous life and safety concerns arising from his review of these reports. It is important for you to know that the Chief Building Official acts independently based on his professional assessment and statutory obligations under the Vancouver City Charter and Vancouver Building By-law.

The demolition of the Balmoral will be complex and staff are in the process of conducting studies to determine the most appropriate approach to demolish the building in a safe and expeditious manner as well as procure the necessary expertise to execute the demolition plan. This plan includes heritage considerations such as the preservation of the historic Balmoral sign. Because of the nature of the Demolition Order and the risks to the public, it is imperative that this work proceed as expeditiously as possible.

We would like to thank Heritage Vancouver for recognizing the complex history of this building and the concern you have expressed for community. We assure you that the City is likewise concerned about the emotional impact that the demolition of this building will have for former residents and their families, friends and the wider community. With many teams and services working in and with DTES communities and stakeholders on a wide variety of policies and programs each and every day, our staff in ACCS are keenly aware of the sensitives and


considerations. As soon as we received the order and reviewed the directions therein, staff began considering how to reach out to the community to seek guidance and involvement in providing respectful and culturally-appropriate support and ceremony through the demolition process.

The City recognizes the importance of the diverse heritage of Vancouver residents and that such heritage is expressed through both built form and intangible cultural practices and experiences. We also recognize – in the case of a building like the Balmoral – the need to centre the voices of communities most impacted when considering next steps.

In terms of Heritage Vancouver's interest in building conservation more generally, we are committed to working within our policy framework and planning tools to integrate heritage conservation within citywide planning and urban development processes when possible.

As we move through demolition planning and confirm timelines, we will stay connected with stakeholders and – now that you have expressed your interest – will include Heritage Vancouver as a stakeholder. Thank you again for your letter and thoughtful consideration of this difficult and complex situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Singh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sandra" being more prominent than the last name "Singh".

Sandra Singh, General Manager
Arts, Culture, and Community Services
sandra.singh@vancouver.ca



Heritage Vancouver

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March 10, 2022

An open letter from Heritage Vancouver to the public about the Balmoral Hotel

In late February, the City of Vancouver released its decision to demolish the historic Balmoral Hotel. Nearly 30 years ago, a statement prepared by researchers established the building's value to the city's history and period architecture. The hotel is currently on a municipal list of significant buildings.

The ideas and methods used by architects and historians to determine the value of older buildings such as the Balmoral formed the foundation of the city's heritage program. These ideas and city heritage policies have shaped public understandings of preservation and of what heritage is about and not about. In the case of the Balmoral Hotel, its Chicago-style architectural features and cultural associations with the period of economic prosperity during the development of early settler Vancouver define this building's value as heritage. It is a common assumption that any heritage response to the city's decision will be about the Balmoral's preservation.

But peoples' relationships to places are not that straightforward and our thinking is that heritage conversations therefore need to become much more nuanced.

Every year Heritage BC sets the theme across the province for heritage week, which just ended recently. "Altogether Inclusive" was this year's theme, a very intentioned one to encourage the sector to be more inclusive. With this in mind, we would like to offer another way to think of what heritage can be about and how it could be practiced.

The question of who has the power to decide the meanings of the Balmoral Hotel matters a great deal. This is especially true because we know there are many people with real and difficult experiences with the Balmoral and the Downtown Eastside who are not in a position to see the building as an architectural gem. There is a very important and difficult urban history in the Downtown Eastside that is not part of the official heritage account.

In order to understand the Balmoral Hotel as a place, we feel it is important to not distance ourselves from its present social context and the history that led to today. We feel it is necessary to make space and have kind interactions and/or relationships with people who know this building in a very different way so that they are centred in conversations about neighbourhood social history, what this place means and what would serve them most.

We benefit society more if we open ourselves to the idea that heritage can be much more than only saving objects, and that positive heritage outcomes take different

forms. In this case, heritage could be a process that supports people directly impacted by the Balmoral and Downtown Eastside in ways they identify would help them work through their relationship to the building.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Yuen', with a stylized, cursive script.

Bill Yuen
Executive Director, Heritage Vancouver