



Date: February 16, 2011

**TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board**  
**FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation**  
**SUBJECT: Komagata Maru Monument – Harbour Green Park**

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## RECOMMENDATION

*THAT the Board accept the donation of a monument to the Komagata Maru Incident to be installed in Harbour Green Park with all arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager.*

## POLICY

In 1988, the Park Board adopted the *Acceptance Guidelines for Long Term Gifts of Public Art* and in 1997 the Board adopted the [\*Guidelines for the Review of Proposed Donations of Public Art and/or Memorials\*](#). These guidelines are designed to ensure that high quality artwork and memorials of significance to a broad cross section of Vancouver residents can be added to Vancouver's public spaces; and that community response is included in the considerations for the siting of the works.

The core principle of these policies is shared decision-making. The Park Board controls and approves the use of park land and park facilities, and reviews the technical analysis and consultation with the public. The Park Board also consults the Public Art Committee regarding the aesthetic and artistic merit of proposed artworks and site contextualization.

## BACKGROUND

The Board has received a proposal from representatives of the Khalsa Diwan Society for a monument to the Komagata Maru Incident. The monument is being funded through the Historical Recognition Program administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

## DISCUSSION

The Komagata Maru marine vessel arrived in Vancouver harbour in 1914 carrying 376 British citizens of South Asian heritage. Due to exclusionary immigration policies of the time, 356 of these people were denied entry. The ship was in the harbour for two months and the passengers relied on the generosity of private citizens for food and water. The ship was eventually escorted out to sea. (See Appendix A)

In 2008, the Canadian government and Province of British Columbia issued formal apologies for the Komagata Maru Incident.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Historical Recognition Program has approved funding to the Khalsa Diwan Society for the planning stage of a monument to mark this incident and given preliminary approval for the funds to build it. The selection process included a citizen committee review of the proposals.

The Khalsa Diwan Society extended some of this funding to hire a consultant to lead the project through the standard donations process required by the Park Board. E. Lees and Associates, a firm with extensive expertise was hired for this project.

The Park Board's standard siting principle requiring any monument location be directly relevant to the event being memorialized was applied and locations with direct visual connection to the mooring site were reviewed. Two suitable locations were identified through technical reviews with staff, one in Stanley Park the other in Harbour Green Park. Extensive community consultation and stakeholder engagement led to the selection of the Harbour Green location. (See Appendix B) Public response indicated that retention of the large green 'field' area and scenic views were concerns to be factored into the monument design.

E. Lees and Associates developed a conceptual design for the monument which addressed the identified public concerns, the proponent's desire for a strong educational aspect, and the recognition that a monument needs to draw diverse publics together. (See Appendix C) An open house was held at Coal Harbour Community Centre to solicit response to two versions of the design. (See Appendix D) Public response indicated that historical accuracy, retention of as much of the existing plantings as possible and safety were the major considerations to be factored into the detailed design stage.

The Public Art Committee has been consulted and offered support for the aesthetics of the conceptual design and the proposed siting in Harbour Green Park. The Park Board Planning and Operations staff have conducted a review of the conceptual design and site and indicated that safety and retention of plantings are key issues to consider in the detailed design stage.

With Park Board approval of conceptual design and siting, the Khalsa Diwan Society will move the project into the design development stage. The developed design and costing are required for March 31 of this year in accordance with the grant conditions. Once approved by Citizenship and Immigration Canada the construction and installation stages would commence with a completion date on or before March 31, 2012.

## **SUMMARY**

Staff is recommending the Board approve this proposal. The monument meets the Board's criteria for "Long Term Gifts of Public Art". Preliminary technical and risk-management reviews have been completed by Park Board staff and key concerns will be addressed in the detailed design stage. Community response has been balanced and concerns mitigated in the conceptual design will be further addressed in the subsequent

phase. The Public Art Committee has determined the work has cultural and artistic value and that the proposed location provides an appropriate context.

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# APPENDIX A: History

## Komagata Maru Incident

### Historical Context

#### SS Komagata Maru



The SS Komagata Maru travelled from Hong Kong with 376 passengers of East Indian descent they "...named their ship the Guru Nanak Jahaz after the first Sikh Guru"

Hugh Johnston: "The voyage of the Komagata Maru..."  
The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar

#### Aboard the Komagata Maru



"...furnished with 533 wooden benches ... aside from a barrel shaped portable coal stove there were no other installations; no tables or chairs, spaced every one and a half metres on which the passengers were to throw their bedding"

Hugh Johnston: "The voyage of the Komagata Maru..."  
The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar

#### Komagata Maru in Vancouver Harbour



"...about a kilometre out, in front of the immigration building at the foot of Burrard Street"

Hugh Johnston: "The voyage of the Komagata Maru..."  
The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar



Immigration building at Coal Harbour



Coal Harbour c. 1930; approximate position of Komagata Maru & Immigration building shown



#### Observing the Activity



Passengers looking towards Vancouver

"Gathered on the waterfront were the Sikhs from Vancouver; and when the Komagata Maru came closer, one of them began signaling by semaphore..."

Hugh Johnston: "The voyage of the Komagata Maru..."  
The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar



Spectator boats surround the Komagata Maru



Onlookers on wharf looking towards the Komagata Maru

### Komagata Maru Monument

KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY

Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

LEES+Associates  
Landscape Architects

## APPENDIX B: Site

Site Context

Harbour Green Park

Proposed Project Site

Site Photos

Looking west towards The Mill restaurant

Looking east towards the Convention Centre

Looking north towards the Harbour

Komagata Maru Monument

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## APPENDIX C: Conceptual Design

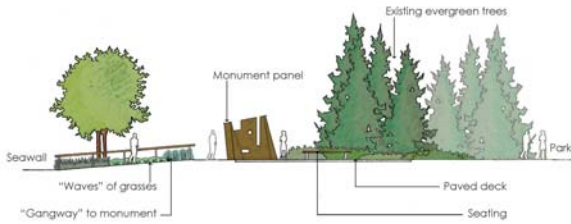
### Monument Concept

#### Goals

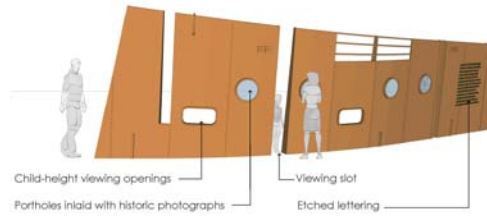
- To provide views of the mooring site of the Komagata Maru while respecting existing views;
- To retain and benefit the amenity, open space and accessibility of Harbour Green Park, and
- To create a meaningful monument that promotes reflection and education.



Concept Sketches



Section



Perspective

#### Material Concepts



Weathered steel finish



Integration of historic photographs



Steel panels



Linear paving to deck



Portholes



Lettering etched into steel

### Komagata Maru Monument

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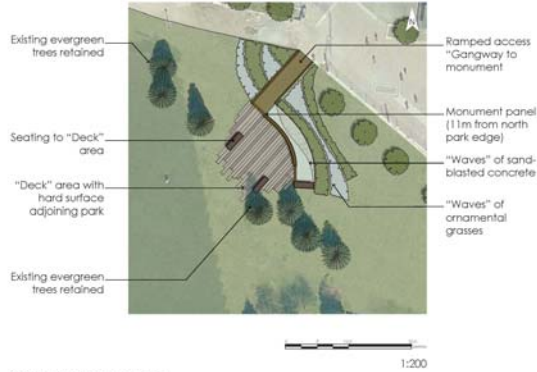
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## APPENDIX D: Design Options

### Monument Options

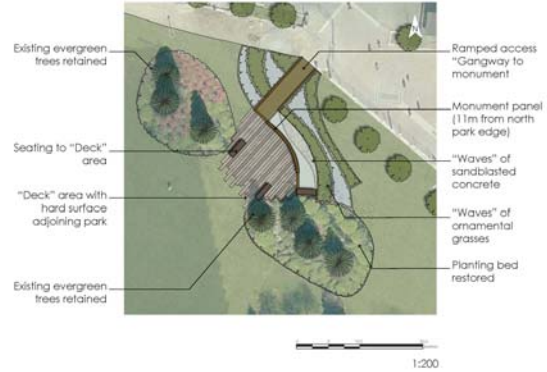
#### Option A: Increased Open Space

Existing evergreen trees are retained and the plant bed is replaced with grass. This will open up enclosed parts of the park and add to the park's useable open space.



#### Option B: Restored Planting Bed

Existing evergreen trees are retained and the existing plant bed is configured into two new areas to better address the changing uses in and round the park.



#### Planting Concepts



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