

MEMORANDUM

addressed to : Honourable Robert Williams
Minister of Lands, Forests, & Water Resources
Minister of Recreation and Conservation
Province of British Columbia

Mr. Turnbull
Mr. Mitchell
Mr. DeMott

from
SAVE OUR PARKLAND ASSOCIATION

SUBJECT : University Endowment Lands

SUMMARY

The University Endowment Lands meet accepted criteria for a natural area regional park. We urge the enactment of a new plan for these 'Lands' which would ensure for posterity the preservation of most of the remaining undeveloped area as parkland. With this basic premise a careful comprehensive plan for the park could be formulated by professional park-planning personell with periodic feedback from public meetings. A balance of recreational and natural areas should be established in conformance with the principle that recreational facilities will not interfere with the valuable natural features that distinguish the area at the present time. It appears to us that the most appropriate agency to carry out the planning and development, and eventually administer the area, would be the Regional Parks Board.

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Introduction

Due to current trends in our society there is an increasing need for parkland. This is being met in part by the establishment of large natural parks in the northern sections of the Province. A more critical need is for parks near the center of population in the Greater Vancouver area. The same population concentration which creates the acute need for parkland also makes the acquisition of suitable sites for parks very difficult.

The Endowment Lands were established in 1923 to provide revenue for the University of British Columbia. No practical comprehensive scheme has been formulated and pursued to achieve this end. The result has been a piecemeal loss of : (1) the land itself (Towers Beach), (2) public control of the land (King Edward Estates), and (3) the natural features of the land (filling of the Camosun bog). This erosion, together with a real-estate development, has reduced the original 2500 acres to approximately 1600 acres, without benefit to the University or to the population-at-large.

TO PREVENT FURTHER LOSS OR WASTE OF THESE VALUABLE LANDS IT IS URGED THAT NO FURTHER CHANGE IN THEIR STATUS BE PERMITTED UNTIL A MASTER PLAN IS DRAWN UP.

There are two alternatives for such a master plan :

- (1) intensive development in an attempt to derive income for the University.
- (2) dedication of the bulk of the 'Lands' as parkland.

THE SAVE OUR PARKLAND ASSOCIATION IS AGAINST INTENSIVE DEVELOPMENT (the original endowment concept) - for the following reasons :

- (1) According to estimates contained in the reports of the Turner Commission (1956) and the Project Planning Associates(Webb & Knapp- 1961), intensive residential development would yield between 2 and 3 million dollars annually, in the former instance only after an initial investment of 20 million and a wait of 15 years. The University budget being in the vicinity of 90 million, this would mean an increase of only 3%. Such a small increase does not approach the potential

value of the area as parkland. Amalgamation of the 'Lands' with the City of Vancouver would be of no greater benefit to the University and would create a heavy load for the taxpayers of the City because of the large capital outlays required for drainage and trunk services.

(2) The establishment of an industrial park, apart from its doubtful benefit for the University, would require transportation corridors through the west side of Vancouver, detracting from the quality of life there.

Save Our Parkland Association SUPPORTS THE PLEAS (from S.P.E.C., Crisis Operation, UBC Alma Mater Society, Queen Elizabeth School P.Y.A.) FOR THE DEDICATION AS PARKLAND OF THE MAJORITY OF THE REMAINING ENDOWMENT LANDS, for the following reasons :

(1) There would be continuation of the de facto park and ecological study-area that the 'Lands' currently supply. If the commercial potential of the 'Lands' is not achieved nothing is taken away from the University, as it has never been realized to any degree. However, if the 'Lands' were 'developed' (in a commercial sense) the following groups will have to look elsewhere for the recreational and scientific opportunities that they now find in the 'Lands'.

- a. UBC - field trips, laboratories, research projects (see Norris, D.J. "Educational and Research Uses of the UBC Endowment Lands, April, 1971)
- b. Vancouver School Board out-door classrooms.
- c. Boy Scouts, Strollers, Equestrians, Naturalists & Bird-watchers, pleasure drivers.

(2) There is need to protect and take advantage of the following unique features of the area :

- a. Location - tracts of unalienated land close to the center of ~~the~~ population in the Lower Mainland are rare. The remaining undeveloped areas in the City of Vancouver are fast disappearing.
- b. Varied geography - ravines, beaches, mature forests, cliffs, bogs, and streams.
- c. Flora - the only valley forest west of Mission. Eight different plant communities including bog, aspen groves.
- d. Fauna - two heronies, seashore life, shoreline marsh communities. Birds : 100 species including many which are difficult to find elsewhere in the Lower Mainland. The 'Lands' have the third highest number of species in the district.

(3) There is need for more regional parkland, due to recent rapid increase in population, increased leisure time, and available money. Each crown-granted acre of parkland represents a significant saving to the regional and provincial taxpayer. A park the size of the Endowment Lands would take some of the pressure off Stanley Park, which is approaching over-utilization.

The University Endowment Lands have a potential for high-grade areas suitable for leisure-activities that are most in demand in the Lower Mainland parks : swimming and beach activity, strolling, picnicking, hiking, nature-study, pleasure driving, trail-riding, and golfing.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOAL THAT IS RECOMMENDED BY THIS ASSOCIATION

We suggest that if the principles outlined herein are acceptable the stage would be set by a strong initial statement of policy from the Provincial Government. An agreement in principle and an offer of cooperation would be sought from the University of B.C., the Greater Vancouver Regional District, and the City of Vancouver. An agency would be established to formulate a comprehensive plan for the natural area regional park. This plan would provide for a balance of natural and recreational areas with a firm endeavor to preserve the valuable natural features that now exist. During formulation of the plan there would be allowance for communication with interested groups and informed individuals from the general public.

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