

**NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release  
31 January 2019

**PROPOSED CANADIAN MARITIME MUSEUM IN VICTORIA, BC**

The Board of Directors of the Maritime Museum of British Columbia Society has issued a proclamation in support of the development of a new Canadian Maritime Museum in Victoria, British Columbia. The proclamation under the title, *Celebrating 150 Years of Building Canada* states that:

**WHEREAS** in 1871, the Dominion of Canada committed to building a transcontinental railway from Montreal to the Pacific coast of North America as one of the terms and conditions of British Columbia joining Confederation;

**WHEREAS** on July 20, 2021, British Columbia will celebrate 150 years since becoming Canada's sixth province to enter the Dominion of Canada;

**WHEREAS** 28 Bastion Square, the first major public building constructed by British Columbia after joining Confederation and the former home of The Maritime Museum of British Columbia for over 50 years, was designated as a National Historic Site of Canada in 1980;

**WHEREAS** Canada's Pacific Region does not have a National Museum;

**WHEREAS** Canada has three oceans and the longest coastline in the world that is shared by eight Canadian Provinces and three Territories;

**WHEREAS** the Board of Directors of The Maritime Museum of British Columbia Society proposes the development of a new *Canadian Maritime Museum* at 28 Bastion Square in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of British Columbia's entry into Confederation; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Maritime Museum of British Columbia Society requests that the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada agree to work together toward the official opening of a new *Canadian Maritime Museum* in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada on July 20, 2021.



28 Bastion Square - Maritime Museum of British Columbia Photographic Collection



## **BUILDING A CANADIAN MARITIME MUSEUM AT 28 BASTION SQUARE**

Canada currently has six national museum corporations under the Federal *Museums Act*, four of which are located in the Ottawa Capital Region, one in Halifax, and one in Winnipeg. Don Prittie, President of the Board of Directors of the Maritime Museum of BC stated that, "*the return of the Museum to its renovated premises and its transformation into a Canadian Maritime Museum will ensure that the Pacific Region is included in the national museum fabric of Canada.*" The completion of the project will also recognize the pivotal role of Canada's maritime history and pay credence to our official motto of the Dominion of Canada that is inscribed in Latin on the Canadian Coat of Arms, '*A Mari Usque Ad Mare*', which in English means '*From Sea to Sea*'.

In addition to renovating and seismically upgrading the historic building, the project also proposes to build a connecting Annex and an offsite collection storage building. The Annex and offsite storage facility will be designed in collaboration with the Songhees Nation and in consultation with other First Nations, with the hope that Indigenous historic artefacts that are currently stored elsewhere may be able to be returned back to the Pacific Region and closer to their regional site of origin. Chief Ron Sam of the Songhees Nation is in support of the Maritime Museum of BC becoming a Canadian Maritime Museum. Chief Sam stated that, "*the Bastion Square courthouse is in the heart of our traditional territory and carries a sad history with our people. It would be transformative to collaborate on something new, sharing our cultures, telling the easy and the hard stories together and celebrating all that we love about the sea.*"

**The proposed new mandate of the Canadian Maritime Museum is:** *to explore, experience and discover maritime history and ocean science through experiential learning, in order to enhance Canadian knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the events, people, objects and technology that reflect the multi-coastal characteristics of Canada's coastal environments, and to inspire Canadians to better understand these special geographic regions and their heritage and cultural relationship to the world.*

**The public policy role is** *to play an essential role, individually and together with other museums and like institutions, in preserving and promoting the maritime heritage, science and culture of Canada's multi-coastal regions and all its peoples throughout Canada and abroad, and in contributing to the collective memory and sense of identity of all Canadians; and to be a source of inspiration, research, learning and entertainment that belongs to all Canadians and provides, in both Official Languages, a service that is essential to Canadian culture and available to all.*

David Leverton, Executive Director of the Maritime Museum of BC stated that, "*this project has the potential to be a major economic and educational win-win for all of the citizens of the Greater Victoria Region and British Columbia along with fellow Canadians who will have the opportunity to learn more about Canada's amazing multi-coastal heritage, science and culture. Our goal is to be the smallest national museum in Canada with the largest public outreach by developing travelling mobile exhibits and digital programs and by working collaboratively with other maritime museums and interested communities.*"

New exhibits and hands-on interactive displays will highlight the intertwined maritime history of Canada's Indigenous people and European settlers and our multi-coastal heritage and cultural characteristics of what it means to be Canadian. It will also engage the public with Canada's unique maritime science through new public outreach initiatives. A recent study was conducted by the City of Victoria to determine the future use of 28 Bastion Square as a cultural arts hub and best efforts have



been made to incorporate elements of that study into this proposed national project. This will ensure that both the building and the Victoria arts community can thrive and add vibrancy to Victoria's downtown core.

The development plans also include adding outdoor lighting and film presentations about Canada's maritime history, science and culture on the outside walls of the building for the benefit of local residents and summer visitors. This will be an added benefit to local area businesses especially during the busy summer months and will be an exciting addition to this proposed new national attraction.

The proposed new *Canadian Maritime Museum* at 28 Bastion Square is estimated to create 37 full-time and six part-time jobs as well as several contract positions for graphic designers, digital and video producers, exhibit designers, exhibit fabricators, IT technicians, janitorial and security services and by fiscal year 2023-2024 is expected to contribute over \$10 million dollars annually into the local economy. The project will increase cultural, arts and heritage related activities; increase the educational role of the museum in serving school children locally, regionally and nationally; offer programs and activities for people of all ages and abilities; serve as a training space for Indigenous youth interested in museology work; provide opportunities for First Nation collaboration on exhibits and interpretive programs; open the door for potential repatriation of West Coast artefacts for interested First Nations; and allow for onsite carving demonstrations.

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For further information, please contact:

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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Maritime Museum of British Columbia has been without a permanent home for the past three years and have been operating from a small 3,000 square foot location at 634 Humboldt Street since being asked to vacate their long-term home of over 50 years at 28 Bastion Square by the Provincial Government. The museum staff and volunteers were forced to pack up and move the vast collection of items that have been donated to the Museum dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to today, including more than 35,000 artefacts, almost 40,000 photos, 30,000 ship plans, 500 pieces of art, over 8,000 reference books and three vessels of great historic significance. The majority of the items being cared for by the Museum on behalf of the residents of British Columbia and fellow Canadians, are now in storage and largely inaccessible to the public, scholars and historians except by special request.

At the time of the move in the fall of 2015, the Honourable Carole James, MLA for Victoria- Beacon Hill spoke in the BC Legislative Assembly about the "*importance of the history of our province's capital city as a port city and the value in protecting that history and collection through a maritime museum in the capital city*".

The building was the first large structure constructed by the provincial government after joining Confederation in 1871. The iconic architecturally significant building is located in the centre of Victoria's Old Town and has remained vacant for the past three years.



The  
**MARITIME MUSEUM**  
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The Museum looked at a number of different site locations throughout the Victoria Inner Harbour and determined that 28 Bastion Square is the best option. Rising sea levels due to climate change and plans by the Provincial Government to seismically upgrade the building that is situated on bedrock were major contributing factors. The building is also already designated as a National Historic Site.

The three phases of the project including renovations to the existing building, the addition of the Class A Museum Annex, and the Collections Storage Facility is estimated to cost \$45 million dollars. The Maritime Museum of British Columbia has applied for an initial grant from the Community, Culture and Recreation Stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. Additional BC government funding will be required to complete the necessary seismic upgrading to the building and long-term operational support will be required from the federal government under a similar funding model that is currently in place for the *Canadian Immigration Museum at Pier 21* in Halifax.

The Maritime Museum of British Columbia's goal is to have the Museum re-open the existing building to the public in time to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of British Columbia joining confederation on July 20, 2021.

#### **REFERENCES**

MLA Carole James Statement on the Maritime Museum of B.C. - YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwdtSRHOix8>

#### **ARTIST'S CONCEPT**

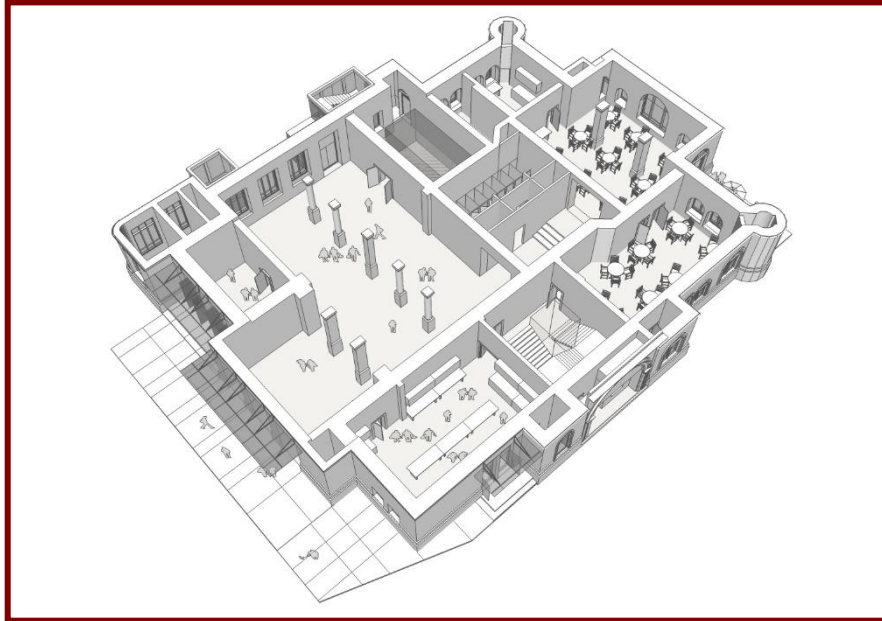
Artist's Concept prepared by Chris Gower, Architect and Urban Design Planner.

**Image One:** The Proposed Re-development of 28 Bastion Square as the Site of a New Canadian Maritime Museum with the attached Class A Museum Annex.



  
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**Image Two:** Proposed Shared Common Area on the First Floor



**Image Three:** Proposed Shared Theatre and Exhibit Area on Second Floor

