



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

### POLICY REPORT DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

Report Date: September 5, 2008  
Contact: Michael Gordon  
Contact No.: 604.873.7665  
RTS No.: 07627  
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20  
Meeting Date: September 30, 2008

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Planning, in consultation with the Managing Director of Cultural Services, General Manager of Engineering Services and Director of Legal Services

SUBJECT: 700 Hamilton Street (CBC/Radio Canada Broadcasting Centre) - Sign By-law Text Amendments - Automatic Changeable Copy Signs (including a Video Sign)

#### *RECOMMENDATION*

THAT the application by the Kent Allen Design Group, on behalf of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, to amend the Sign By-law provisions applying to 700 Hamilton Street to permit four automatic changeable copy signs, including one video sign on the site of Vancouver Broadcasting Centre that will include third-party advertising, and further that the Sign By-law amendments include provisions to permit a stand-alone way-finding sign adjacent to the corner of Robson and Hamilton Streets, be referred to a Public Hearing, together with:

- (i) draft Sign By-law provisions, generally as contained in Appendix 'A;' and
- (ii) the recommendation of the Director of Planning to approve, subject to conditions contained in Appendix 'B;'

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to prepare the necessary amending by-law, generally in accordance with Appendix 'A,' for consideration at the Public Hearing.

#### *GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS*

The General Manager of Community Services recommends the approval of the foregoing.

### ***CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS***

The City Manager recommends the approval of the foregoing.

### ***COUNCIL POLICY***

*Current Sign By-law provisions regulate the number, type, form, appearance and location of signs according to districts and uses. The intent of the Sign By-law is to permit signage that provides information that identifies and locates rather than advertises. It also seeks to minimize the visual intrusion of signs on housing by limiting the size and scale of signs adjacent to residential districts. Generally, in areas where residential uses are less prevalent, Sign By-law regulations are more permissive. There are no discretionary provisions in the Sign By-law.*

*The Sign By-law restricts Automatic Changeable Copy Signs as follows:*

- *limited to commercial and downtown locations;*
- *limited to facia, free-standing or projecting signs;*
- *cannot be within 60 m of a residential area;*
- *limited, on large sites, to a size no more than 8 m<sup>2</sup>; and*
- *cannot display any third-party advertising.*

### ***PURPOSE AND SUMMARY***

This report recommends the referral of amendments of the Sign By-law to public hearing to permit the installation of four automatic changeable copy signs on the CBC/Radio Canada Broadcasting Centre site and a way-finding sign at the corner of Hamilton and Robson Streets. (See Figure One - Location Map).

One of the signs, on the CBC site, will be a video sign that will include air time devoted to third party advertising (50% of the air time), a CBC and Radio Canada video feed (some of which will have embedded third party advertising) accounting for 45% of the air time and the remaining five per cent of the air time to be made available to the City. Cultural Affairs staff will be responsible for co-ordinating the content of this portion of the air time. It is envisaged that this 'air time' will include advertising for non-profit cultural events.

Staff support the proposed signage as it will animate the site, and in particular because its installation on this site reflects the role and function of this site as a broadcasting centre and it can be used for public events that will be held on the CBC plaza, adjacent to the corner of Hamilton and West Georgia Streets.

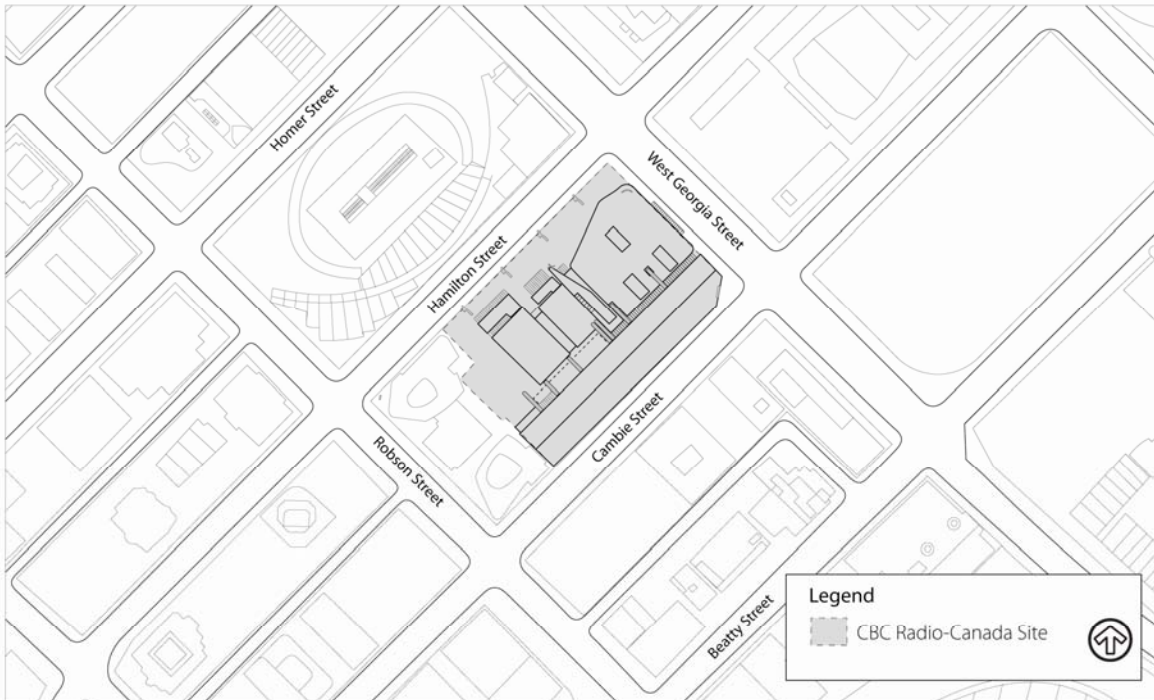


Figure One - Location Map

### **BACKGROUND**

Automatic changeable copy signs are those that include copy that changes through the use of bulbs, tubes and other electronic technology. They can include video signs, signs showing the time and temperature or, in some cases, 'scrolling' copy. The Sign By-law limits opportunities for the erection of automatic changeable copy signs to areas such as the Downtown District and certain shopping districts such as Central Broadway. Their size is also limited to either 4 m<sup>2</sup> (43 sq.ft.) or 8 m<sup>2</sup> (86 sq. ft.) depending on the size of the site. It also does not permit third-party advertising on these signs.

There are a limited number of automatic changeable copy signs in Vancouver which incorporate video technology. The following three video signs were not approved by City Council because they are on Provincial or Federal Government land and at the time that they were erected, the senior governments chose to not apply for Sign By-law amendments to permit the signs:

- Two video signs (one facing east and one facing west) on the BC Place Stadium site; and
- One video sign on the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre.

It is notable that the CBC, though a federal government crown corporation, has chosen to work with the City on their sign proposals and apply for the necessary by-law amendments and permits.

The following three video signs have been approved by Council through site-specific Sign By-law amendments:

- One video sign [maximum permitted size of 27 m<sup>2</sup> or (290 sq. ft.)] on the International Village shopping centre, facing the corner of Abbott Street and Pender Street was approved by Council in 2000, but never built;
- Two video signs (each with a maximum size of 28 m<sup>2</sup> or 301 sq. ft.), at the corner of Robson and Granville Streets, approved by Council in 2003.

The International Village sign can display third party advertising on the condition that the goods and services are sold on the premises. The Robson and Granville video signs can display third party advertising up to 90 percent of the air time. Establishing that the video signs should provide a public benefit, Council approved a condition of approval for this sign by requiring up to approximately 2 ½ hours of air time each day must be made available for the advertising of non-profit cultural events and the display of video works, curated by artist-run centres. The owner of this sign also gives the City funding for Cultural Affairs staff to co-ordinate this air time as well as the funding for video works.

On January 16, 2006, the Development Permit Board approved renovations and public realm improvements for the CBC/Radio Canada Broadcasting Centre as well as a residential development on the block bounded by Robson, Hamilton, West Georgia, and Cambie Streets. The development on the south side of the block includes commercial land uses and two residential towers. The broadcasting centre and a public events plaza, oriented to Hamilton and West Georgia Streets, is located on the north side of the block. The City has a statutory ROW giving the public access to this plaza.

One of the Development Permit Board's conditions for the approval of the project was to prepare a site and landscape plan that would visually animate the site. City staff and CBC staff and their design consultants had a series of meetings to develop a comprehensive plan for signage. Included in this, CBC staff also proposed the erection of a video sign as part of the public plaza.

### *DISCUSSION*

#### 1. Proposed Sign By-law Amendments

Staff support the following proposed Sign By-law amendments:

- Permit four automatic changeable copy signs including one video sign, on the block bounded by Hamilton, Georgia, Cambie and Robson Streets;
- Permit the video sign to be larger than is generally permitted in the city or for this size of site;
- Permit the display of third-party advertising on the video sign; and
- Permit a freestanding way-finding sign at the corner of Robson and Hamilton Streets.

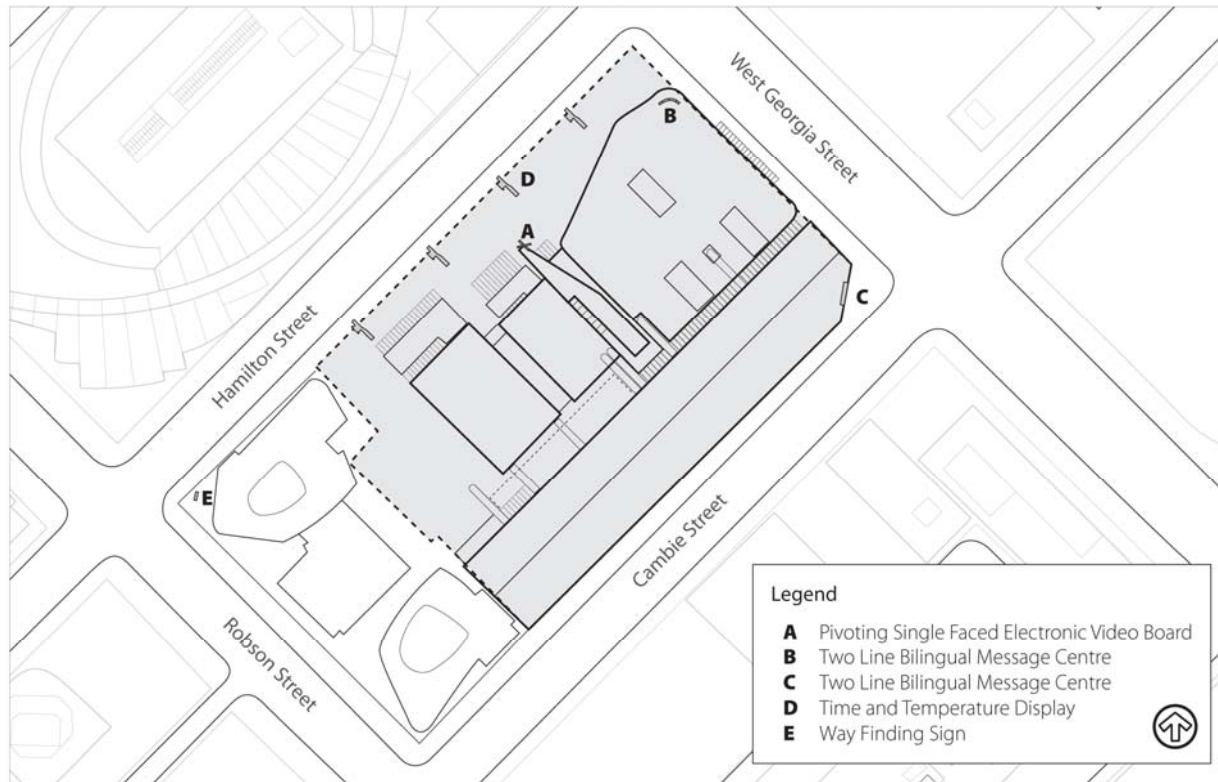


Figure Two - Proposed Signs with Automatic Changeable Copy

The following is the CBC's proposal for four signs with automatic changeable copy on their site:

**One Video Sign on the CBC Public Plaza:** The CBC has proposed the installation of, as part of the improvements to the public plaza, a large video sign approximately 3 m (10 ft.) by 5 m (15 ft.) or 15 m<sup>2</sup> (150 sq.ft.), including the frame of the video screen (Identified as 'A' in Figure 2). In almost all instances, the sign will face West Georgia Street. During a special plaza event, the screen can be pivoted so that it faces Hamilton Street. The pivoting of the sign and the times when the sign can have sound, will be controlled by the City. Regarding the content of the video screen, the CBC is proposing that:

- 5% of the air time will be available for content controlled by the City;
- Up to 50% of the air time may be commercials provided by an ad agency (i.e. third-party content); and
- 45% or more of the air time will be a CBC feed, which will include promotions for CBC programming, a feed from CBC programmes and commercials embedded in this source of air time (i.e. additional third-party content).

**Two Message Boards (automatic changeable copy signs):** These two signs lit by LED lights are proposed for installation above two entrances, one oriented to the corner of Cambie and West Georgia Streets and a second, oriented to Hamilton and West Georgia Streets. These will not include third-party content. The LED lettering will be displayed on a sign approximately 20 cm (8 inches) in height and 4.9 m (16 ft.) long. (Identified as 'B' and 'C' on Figure 2)

**One Free-standing Media Lantern (displaying automatic changeable copy):** Located adjacent to Hamilton Street and the CBC Public Plaza, the signs will include the CBC logo, way-finding directions and one sign will include, the time and temperature and other messages about CBC programming. (Identified as 'D' in Figure 2) The proposed sign is approximately 4 m (12 ft.) high and 1.22 m (4 ft.) wide.

Staff are further proposing that the by-law amendments also include the following:

**A Freestanding Way-finding Sign:** In addition to the signage proposed by the CBC, City staff are recommending a Sign By-law amendment which will permit an additional free-standing sign, on privately-owned lands, adjacent to one of the Concord Pacific towers, near the corner of Hamilton and Robson Streets. The sign would provide directions to the locations of the CBC production facilities and residential towers on the block. Its dimensions are the same as that proposed for the freestanding media lantern, described above. CBC did not include this proposal in their text amendment application because this sign is not located on lands owned by the CBC. A way-finding sign in this location was originally part of the comprehensive signage proposal prepared for the block by staff and the applicant. (Identified as 'E' in Figure 2)

## 2. Rationale for the Proposed Amendments

Staff support the signs proposed by the CBC, including the addition of automatic changeable copy, because:

- they will help animate the public areas and entrances;
- they will provide way-finding information on this large site; and
- the signage proposal reflects the urban design objectives for the site.

Staff support the proposed video sign because:

- a video sign is a useful piece of contemporary infrastructure for gatherings in public plazas and it is also particularly appropriate that the video sign is located on the site of a television broadcasting production facility;
- approval of the video sign on a site-specific basis ensures that it is sited so that it minimizes the impact on adjacent residents and reflects the urban design and public realm objectives for the site;
- although the sign is marginally less distant (53.3 m (175 feet)) from a residential area than that required by the Sign By-law (60m (197 feet)), the sign is oriented away from the nearest façades of the adjacent residential towers and will only be pivoted to face Hamilton Street during a special event; and
- CBC have agreed to limit 3<sup>rd</sup> party content to no more than 50% of the air time of the signs plus the advertising embedded in the video feed from CBC programming;
- CBC have agreed to provide 5% of the air time for purposes to be determined by the City.

Staff do not envisage or support the proliferation of video signs of this size in the city. As noted above, this site is unique because the video sign will be used for public events on the plaza and the building is a broadcasting facility. The amendments to permit the video sign are site-specific and require Council approval. Staff note that additional signs of this size will require an amendment of the by-law and recommend that the consideration of similar

proposals will require a strong site-related rationale as well as a public benefit of an equivalent or greater value before allowing for signs of this size and the waiving of the limit of third-party advertising.

In addition, limiting the amendment that permits the video sign to this site, will ensure that the public benefits are secured. For example, the legal agreement that is a condition of approval for the by-law amendment will secure the video 'air time' on the sign for use by the City for advertising non-profit cultural events (see Appendix 'B').

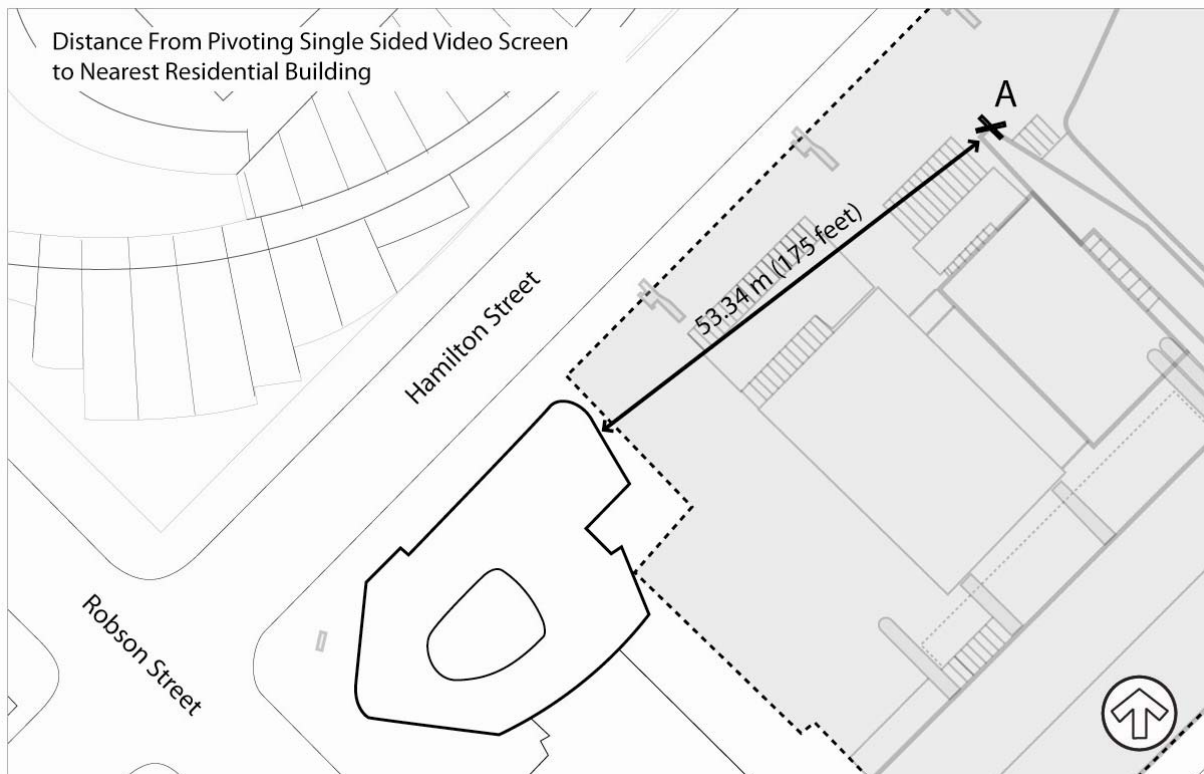


Figure Three - Distance from nearest residential building

### 3. Public Input

Staff propose that a Public Open House be organized in advance of the public hearing. There will be ads in community newspapers advertising the Open House. Comments received at this Open House, as well as other input received will be summarized and distributed to Council in advance of the Public Hearing considering the proposed Sign By-law text amendments.

#### ***FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

There are no financial implications of the proposed amendments of the Sign By-law.

#### ***CONCLUSION***

The recent up-grading and expansion of the CBC/Radio Canada Broadcasting Centre included four signs with automatic changeable copy. These signs have been supported by staff as a way

to animate the site. In particular, the proposed video sign will also be a useful piece of infrastructure for holding events on the CBC plaza. The amendments will permit an additional stand-alone way-finding sign adjacent to the corner of Hamilton and Cambie Streets.

\* \* \* \* \*



The Sign By-law should be amended generally as outlined below:

CBC/Radio Canada  
Vancouver Broadcasting Centre

Draft for public hearing

BY-LAW NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**A By-law to amend Sign By-law No. 6510**

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VANCOUVER, in public meeting, enacts as follows:

1. Council repeals section 11.9, and substitutes:

“An animated sign or a flashing sign shall only be permitted

- (a) on Granville Street, between West Hastings Street and Nelson Street on a building face which fronts a street, excluding a lane, and only if any lighting associated with the sign is directed only toward Granville Street, and
- (b) in the area regulated by Section 1.0(n) of Schedule B.”

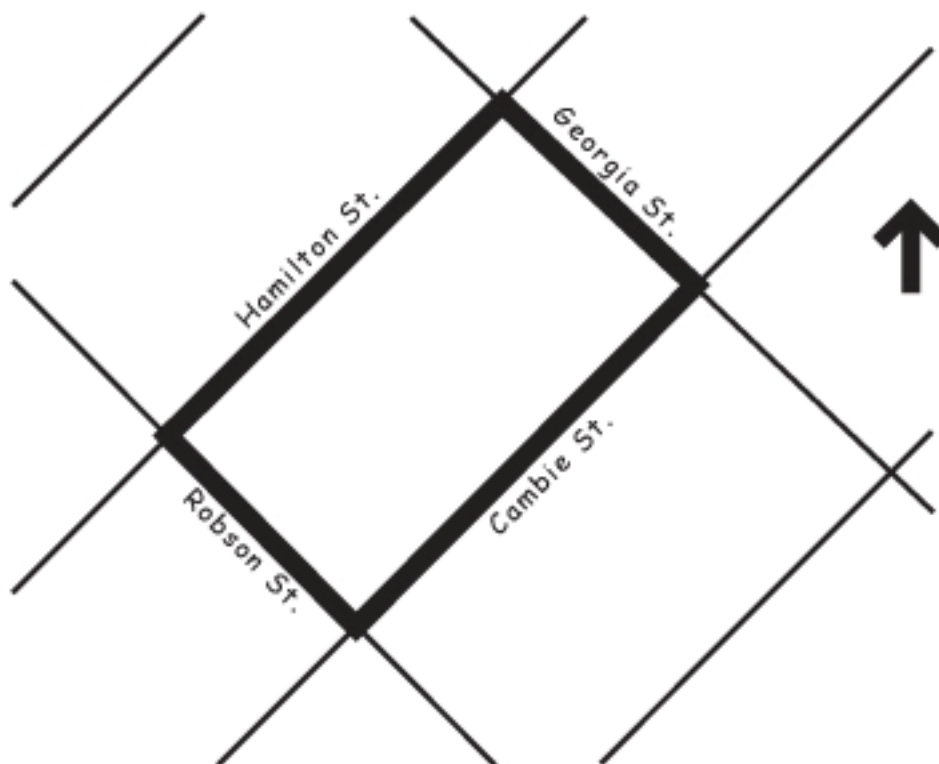
2. After section 1.0(m) of Schedule B to the Sign By-law, Council adds:

“(n) despite anything to the contrary in this By-law, but only in the area identified in Map 3, being the block bounded by Cambie Street, Georgia Street, Hamilton Street, and Robson Street:

- (i) one free-standing sign adjacent to the corner of Robson Street and Hamilton Street in respect of which:
  - (A) the height of the copy area must not exceed 310 mm;
  - (B) the height of the sign must not exceed 3.7 m;
  - (C) the height and width of any logo must not exceed 135 mm; and
  - (D) sections 10.7.1, 10.7.2(f), 11.1.1, 11.8.3, and 11.8.4 do not apply;
- (ii) one automatic changeable copy fascia sign, at the level of the first storey, adjacent to the Cambie Street frontage in respect of which sections 10.6.4(a), 10.6.4(b), and 11.8.5 do not apply;
- (iii) one automatic changeable copy sign adjacent to the Georgia Street frontage in respect of which sections 10.6.4(d), 11.8.4, and 11.9 do not apply;

- (iv) one automatic changeable copy double sided free-standing sign adjacent to the Hamilton Street frontage in respect of which:
  - (A) the size of the copy area for each side of the sign must not exceed 2.9 m<sup>2</sup>; and
  - (B) sections 10.7.1, 10.7.2(e), and 11.1.1 do not apply;
- (v) one automatic changeable copy projecting sign, at the level of the second storey, in respect of which:
  - (A) the size of the sign must not exceed 15 m<sup>2</sup>;
  - (B) the area of third party advertising, except for a video feed from a publicly-owned broadcasting corporation, must not exceed 50% of the copy area; and
  - (C) sections 10.11.2(a)(iii), 10.11.2(c), 10.11.2(d), 10.11.4(d), 11.1.1, 11.6, 11.8.3, 11.8.4, 11.8.5, 11.8.7, 11.8.8, 11.8.9, and 11.9 do not apply.

**MAP 3**



**Vancouver Broadcasting Centre (CBC/Radio Canada)  
Sign By-law Amendments**

Sign By-law Text Amendment - 798 Granville Street  
Proposed Conditions of Approval

**Provision of `air time' on the video sign:** Prior to enactment of the text amendment to the Sign By-law the registered owner of 700 Hamilton Street shall make arrangements to the satisfaction of the Managing Director of Cultural Services and the Director of Legal Services for the execution of a legal agreement by the owner and the City setting out:

- 1) the terms and conditions of the use and operation of the video signs by the owner; and
- 2) securing, without limitation, the amount and timing of City of Vancouver `air time' on the video signs by the owner on an annual basis to cover the City's cost of managing the City's `air time.'

The legal agreement shall be drawn, not only as a personal covenant of the owner, but also as a covenant pursuant to Section 219 of the Land Title Act and shall be registered against title to the lands, to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services.