



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: September 15, 2025
Contact: Margaret Wittgens
Contact No.: 604.871.6858
RTS No.: 18107
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
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TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager, Arts, Culture, and Community Services
SUBJECT: Delegated Authorities for Civic Collections

Recommendations

THAT Council delegate the following authorities concerning Vancouver's civic collections:

- i. The General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services, or their delegate, is authorized to approve future changes to the Collection Policies for Vancouver's civic collections when required; and
- ii. The General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services or the Managing Director, Arts & Culture is authorized to approve requests of up to \$3 million value, related to the accessioning, deaccessioning, and loans to other institutions, of assets in the City's civic collections.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report recommends delegated authority related to Vancouver's civic collections to enable staff to approve future collection policy updates, as well as accessioning (adding an item to a collection), deaccessioning (removing an item from a collection), and collection loan requests (lending an item or group of items to another institution) under \$3 million, when City approval is required. Delegated authorities would apply to any cultural institution managing a City civic collection, including the Vancouver Museum Society (MOV), the Vancouver Maritime Museum Society (VMM), and the Vancouver Art Gallery Association (VAG), collectively referred to as the "Collecting Institutions".

The authority to approve changes to each Collecting Institution's respective constitution and bylaws when required would remain with Council.

These recommendations support key civic policy and strategic directions as follows:

- *Vibrant Vancouver: City Council's Strategic Priorities 2023-2026*
- *Culture|Shift*, the City's 10-year culture plan, including the *Vancouver Music Strategy* and *Making Space for Arts and Culture*

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- August 29, 2006: Council endorsed the Collection Policies of the Museum of Vancouver and the Vancouver Maritime Museum in accordance with the British Columbia Museums Association's "Standards for B.C. Museums" ([RTS 05236](#)).
- Section 190 of the *Vancouver Charter* authorizes Council to provide for the acquisition and disposal of any real or personal property of the City, including by way of lease or license, when in Council's opinion such property is not required by the City, upon such terms and conditions as may be deemed expedient.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

Vancouver's Civic Collections

The City of Vancouver holds extensive collections of art and artifacts held in trust by the following external non-profit organizations: the Vancouver Museum Society (MOV), The Vancouver Maritime Museum Society (VMM), and The Vancouver Art Gallery Association (VAG), referred to as the "Collecting Institutions."

In 2006 Council endorsed a Collection Policy framework based on the British Columbia Museums Association's "Standards for B.C. Museums" (1993). The framework provides a baseline for the care, preservation and management of the civic collections managed externally by the MOV, VMM, and VAG. It was recommended that their collection policies continue to be amended regularly to ensure they remain current with industry standards. The approach was to establish expectations and responsibilities at a policy level, and to leave collections management with the institutions' Collections Committees, Board of Directors or Trustees, and professional staff with expertise to care for the City's collections.

According to the Collection Policies, each institution must conform with codes of ethics and principles as articulated by the Canadian Museums Association, British Columbia Museums Association and the International Council of Museums and by others as applicable. Each institution is also subject to relevant regulatory and statutory requirements including all federal and provincial legislation concerning intellectual property, the 1970 UNESCO Convention, cultural property and all other relevant treaties to which Canada is a signatory.

Decisions affecting the collections are guided by the professional advice of collections and curatorial personnel, with a focus on protecting the public interest in the collections for current

and future generations. Managing the City's civic collections is undertaken with care, cultural sensitivity, and expertise.

Relationships with the City

Relationships between the Collecting Institutions and the City are guided by the Collecting Institutions' respective constitution and bylaws, Collection Policies, and agreements with the City. Approvals related to acquisitions, deaccessions, and loans of artworks or objects to other institutions will follow the criteria, processes, approval, and reporting levels set by the Collection Policy of each organization, and varies across institutions. A short description of the activities requiring City approval is provided in Appendix A.

MOV and VMM are required to participate in annual collection spot checks conducted by the City, to submit annual collections reports, and provide certificates of insurance for the collections. City approval is currently required for Collection Policy amendments, deaccessioning requests for objects or collections valued over \$100,000, accessioning requests for objects valued over \$100,000 for VMM only, and requests to loan out items from the civic collection with a total value over \$1 million for MOV only.

The VAG Collection Policy amendments, and accessioning and deaccessioning recommendations, are approved by the VAG Board of Trustees which includes two City Councillors as representatives for the City. Authority for all outgoing loans rest with the VAG's Curatorial Department and is approved by the Chief Curator.

Discussion

While the Collection Policies for the MOV and the VMM dictate that City staff approval is required for Collection Policy amendments, accessioning, deaccessioning, and loan requests, there is ambiguity around whether staff have delegated authority to approve these requests. This report seeks to clarify this authority which will provide consistency moving forward, allowing these decisions to be made by museum professionals with collections and curatorial expertise, and with oversight from the City Arts and Culture staff.

Delegation to approve changes to the collection policies

If Recommendation (i) is approved by Council, staff will review and approve recommended changes to the Collection Policies that meet current museum standards, comply with all applicable legislation, and align with policy directions set by Council. Staff will use current British Columbia Museums Association guidelines as a baseline framework to ensure adherence to collections management standards. This approach will fulfill the City's role in protecting its collections without infringing on the professional autonomy of the Collecting Institutions.

Delegation to approve accessioning, deaccessioning, and collection loan requests

If Recommendation (ii) is approved by Council, staff would have delegated authority to approve accessioning, deaccessioning, and collection loan requests that require City approval, with a financial value up to \$3 million, according to the following table:

TABLE 1. PROPOSED DELEGATED AUTHORITIES CONCERNING

Value of accessioning, deaccessioning, and collection loan request	Approval Authority
Up to \$750,000	Managing Director, Arts & Culture
\$750,001 - \$3,000,000	General Manager, ACCS
Greater than \$3,000,000	City Council

The authority levels in this table were developed in consideration of the authority levels outlined in City of Vancouver procurement policy and are recommended to be reviewed every 5 years to ensure ongoing alignment.

If approved by Council, staff will approve accessioning, deaccessioning, and loan requests if they align with the terms and conditions set out in the institution's Collection Policy, bylaws, or other agreements.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for the City.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with the report's recommendations.

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APPENDIX A

Collections Management Activities and Approvals

This appendix provides short descriptions of the activities outlined in the Collection Policies of the Collecting Institutions that may require City approval.

Accessioning/Acquisitions Process and Approvals

Accessioning and acquisitions refer to the process of acquiring or gaining possession of an object or artwork for a permanent collection. Objects or artworks can be added to the collection through various methods such as gift/donation, purchase, or exchange/transfer. The works must have sufficient provenance to establish clear title, be free and clear of conditions imposed by the donors, and align with the mandate of each institution. Selection is also made with due consideration for the long-term care of the object. Decisions are approved by the institution's Acquisitions/Collections Committee and the Board of Trustees/Directors, and need to meet the criteria and conditions outlined in the institution's Collection Policy.

Loans Process and Approvals

Artworks or objects in permanent collections can be made available for public display as loans from and to other institutions. Professional procedures and standards are established with respect to loan criteria and the proper care, handling, conservation and security of the artworks and objects. Implementation of these procedures ensure conditions, where possible and appropriate, commensurate with the long-term existence of the collection. Considerations generally include assessment of the environmental conditions of the facility, care and handling standards, documentation, insurance and indemnity. Approvals for incoming and outgoing loan requests follow the criteria and conditions outlined in the institution's Collection Policy.

Deaccessioning Process and Approvals

Deaccessioning is the formal process of removing an object from the collection of an institution, a process to be done with great caution and in accordance with the highest professional standards and ethics and in compliance with all applicable laws. Deaccessioning decisions are approved by the Acquisitions/Collections Committee and Board of Trustees/Directors, and need to meet the criteria and conditions for deaccessioning as outlined in the institution's Collection Policy.

There are standard methods of disposal for deaccessioned objects which can include gifting to another institution, exchange or transfer to another institution, return to the rightful owner, sale or destruction. For all collecting institutions, when possible, it is preferable that works deaccessioned from public collections remain in the public domain. For VMM, MOV and VAG, the Collection Policies approved by Council in 2006 indicates that all monies from the sale of deaccessioned works are to be reinvested in the collection, which is consistent with industry standard.