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What Are Our Agents Doing?

There are two troubling questions in regard to City Council's notice to the Maritime Museum to vacate its premises in the old Court House building on Bastion Square. And the dead silence of Council members is not reassuring.

First: Why should the museum have to move anyway — what is the alternate use that is planned for the building? Second arises from the fact that in offering the museum the use of the former Malahat building on Wharf Street, Council included the "site." That suggests that since the building is far too small to house the whole museum there may be an intention of constructing an addition to the unique and historic structure.

Although some officials in the provincial government are believed to favor leaving the museum in its present adequate and appropriate location, there is also a belief that the Court House is hungrily eyed by another department as one more opportunity to expand

government offices throughout the city. It would be a sorry act if the Council sold out the museum on such a basis. Would an attractive offer for City Hall itself be seized if the government saw it as handy accommodation for more provincial offices?

Museum officials see the fine old building, on the Inner Harbor near the foot of Broughton Street, as an attractive structure in an appropriate location for their purposes. But with about 9,000 square feet available, compared with the 27,000 in use in the Court House, there obviously would have to be a drastic curtailment of exhibition and working space.

The alternative would be to build an addition to the existing structure and it is difficult to see how this could be done without irreparably spoiling one of the finest buildings in the city, a universally admired little gem that should not be infringed on any pretext. The estimated cost of renovating the

interior of the place and adding a wing or annex would be in the range of a new building in any case, and rather than destroy the appearance of the structure an entirely new site should be considered.

The silence on these matters so far engenders a good deal of doubt among the many Victorians concerned about their community's appearance. They have survived the Reid Centre threat — but only through sudden provincial government action after City Council had exhausted its options. Will another provincial seizure now have to take place, with the government dashing in at the last minute to rescue the building from its peril? Will the federal government, which leases the building to the City, have to step in and forbid any architectural monkeying with it?

Let's have some facts on what is going on. Let the people know what is being done in their name.