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Province will take over maritime museum

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The provincial government has decided to take over the Maritime Museum, ending years of financial trouble for the museum, it was learned Wednesday.

The takeover will be announced shortly in a joint press release by the city of Victoria and the provincial government.

The agreement was discussed by city council Tuesday behind closed doors. None of the aldermen at the meeting would comment later.

A source in the provincial government, however, disclosed details of the agreement.

- The provincial government will assume full financial responsibility for operation of the museum.

- The museum will be allowed to stay in its present location — the Old Court House in Bastion Square

- The city will get full taxes for the building, which it owns.

The agreement appears to be an ideal solution for all parties.

The city has been complaining for years that allowing the museum to use the building rent-free,

a cost equivalent to \$60,000 a year, was an undue burden on Victoria taxpayers.

The museum has been plagued by money problems for years and there have been several occasions on which museum officials threatened to close the doors.

Recently, the city tried to sell the building, hoping to get more retail businesses into Bastion Square. The museum was told it would have to vacate by the end of this year.

As an alternative, the city offered the museum

the Malahat Building on Wharf as a new home, but museum officials said the building was far too small.

The matter became academic when the city received no acceptable bids for the purchase of the Bastion Square building.

Wednesday afternoon, museum officials had still no knowledge of the impending provincial takeover.

Capt. Keith Cameron, museum director, said he expected word from the city by the middle of this month on whether the museum would have to move.

"The last letter we got was dated June and we've heard nothing further," he said.