Almost $5 million for new Presentation House and North Vancouver museum

Brent Richter / North Shore News
July 31, 2015 05:40 PM

Two of the North Vancouver waterfront's upcoming signature cultural destinations got major boosts on Friday during a marathon of pre-election-call federal funding announcements.

Presentation House Gallery and the North Vancouver Museum and Archives were on the receiving end of $2.5-million and $2.2-million grants from the federal government's Canada Cultural Spaces fund.
The federal cash puts the gallery, which is renowned in photographic arts circles around the world, at $14 million of its $15-million fundraising goal.

"This final piece of funding will allow for construction to begin on this beautiful new facility, which will be an iconic landmark on North Vancouver's waterfront to be enjoyed for generations to come," said North Vancouver MP Andrew Saxton, announcing the funds.

Both of the new facilities will feature about three times the exhibition space they currently have when the new locations open in 2017.

The City of North Vancouver is putting up $2.5 million and the land for the gallery as well as $2.5 million in provincial money left over from the abandoned National Maritime Centre project.

Construction will start in early 2016 and is expected to last 14 months. The striking design by Patkau Architects features a crumpled steel facade intended to reflect and enhance natural light. As part of the same project, the city is building a public plaza and water feature at the foot of Lonsdale where a surface parking lot once sat.

‘‘We’re thinking about it as a piece of architecture that is for people — not only for artists, but for the community to use,” said Reid Shier, Presentation House Gallery director. “Let us get the doors open and I’m confident it will prove itself an epicentre of the community.”

It will be renamed the Polygon Gallery when it opens at 105 Carrie Cates Court, thanks to $4 million in donations from the Audain Foundation and Polygon Homes.

The new museum, which is slated to move into the old Pipe Shop on the Shipyards, is now about 75 per cent of the way to its $10-million goal. The city and district have put up $5 million.

Though there’s still a bit of fundraising to be done, North Vancouver residents can start getting excited now, said Don Evans, chairman of new museum campaign.

‘‘The new museum will be unlike anything you have experienced before, with an imaginative, interactive set of experiences that will be both entertaining and educational for all ages,” he said.

One of the planned exhibits involves paddling a virtual canoe around Burrard Inlet over the years, from pre-contact First Nations times, through to the booming shipbuilding era in the Second World War to today.

‘‘It’s a museum that takes you (on a journey) and tells the story from the past and gives you the opportunity to vision it forward too. It’s totally engaging,” he said.

The museum faces Dec. 31 deadline for facilitators to secure the remainder of their required donations. Evans said he was confident the museum would meet its target.

‘‘We won’t be short,” he said with a laugh. “Plain and simple.”

Mayor Darrell Mussatto said the two projects are critical pieces of the puzzle in revitalizing Lower Lonsdale and the Shipyards site.

‘‘This will be a very dynamic place where people can gather, meet for a meal, visit in the market, take in a concert,

soak in the beautiful views.

‘‘It’s going to be an amazing area, for sure, and we’re very, very proud of it,” he said.

‘‘I think it’s going to be the gathering place for the North Shore and one of the best gathering places in the Lower Mainland.”