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May 14, 2002

For Immediate Distribution – Public Hearing May 14, 2002

Mayor Owen and Council
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Owen and Council:

Re: Proposed Changes to Christ Church Cathedral

The purpose of this letter is to indicate that, while we support the overall revitalization proposal, we do not support the design for new additions in their current form. Although the applicants have satisfactorily resolved the *restoration* aspects of the proposal, we believe the highly *contemporary* design of the proposed new interior elements – rendered in *plate glass, steel and bronze* – will radically alter the historic character and appearance of this precious heritage resource.

We have expressed our concerns in meetings with the applicant as early as Fall 2001, followed by written correspondence dated February 22 and March 1, 2002, and our letter addressed to Council dated March 27. All correspondence was copied to City heritage staff and the Heritage Commission. The latest detail drawings submitted by the applicant April 29 indicate no resolution of the issues of greatest concern to Heritage Vancouver.

It is extremely important that Council members fully understand what is being proposed: In essence, the applicants propose to demolish the wooden 1905 Gothic Revival balcony and the existing entrance area underneath, and replace it with a large new platform ('organ loft') to accommodate a new organ. The combined organ and organ loft will completely dominate the south end of the church. Rather than blending with the dark wood and detailing of the existing interior, the proposed new 'intervention' will shout out its modernity in plate glass and metal. While this approach might be appropriate in other, less sensitive projects, we believe that its application in Christ Church will be an extremely unfortunate mistake.

What we had hoped to see:

A more 'contextual' Gothic Revival design for new construction, employing dark wood and appropriate detailing consistent with existing interior finishes, that would blend visually with the existing interior elements rather than stand in high contrast.

What we do not support:

- Overall contemporary design of organ loft and other new interior features
- Overall use of metal and/or glass for new guard-rails, stairs and enclosures
- Use of plate-glass guard-rails for organ-loft platforms and stairs up
- Use of metal guard rail for north elevation of organ loft
- Contemporary 'mesh' design for metal guard rails (we understand staff are requesting further changes)
- Steel stairs – organ loft
- Plate glass folding partition between main church (nave) and narthex (lobby) area
- Plate glass vestibule enclosures
- Plate glass or metal in other locations, such as proposed for Chancel galleries.

We also note that no drawings for the organ / organ housing have been submitted. As the organ will have a major impact on the church interior, its approval should be subject to design review (we believe city staff agree with this point).

We would also like confirmation from the applicant that new wood finishes will be dark brown in colour to approximate the historic wood finishes rather than the light oak finish originally suggested by the applicants.

In summary, while satisfied with the restoration aspects of the proposal, we cannot support the contemporary plate glass and metal design proposed for new interior construction, particularly the new organ loft. *We respectfully ask that Council instruct staff and the applicant to reconsider the proposed contemporary design and materials in favour of a more contextual approach that blends with the existing Gothic Revival interior elements.*

Sincerely,

Janet Leduc, President

Cc. Yardley McNeill, Heritage Group, City of Vancouver
Julie MacDonald, Chair, Heritage Commission
The Very Reverend Peter G. Elliott, Christ Church Cathedral