

LIONS GATE BRIDGE COMMITTEE
HERITAGE VANCOUVER SOCIETY
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VANCOUVER, B.C.
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Dear Premier Harcourt;

We are writing to you to express the concerns of our membership about the fate of the Lions Gate Bridge. It seems to us inconceivable that your government would even consider dismantling the single most important heritage bridge in the province.

The Lions Gate Bridge is the civic symbol of Vancouver. No other structure identifies us the way that the Lions Gate Bridge does - much the same way that Paris is symbolized by the Eiffel Tower, Seattle by the Space Needle, and San Francisco by the Golden Gate Bridge. This soaring and lyrical steel ribbon represents our city to the world.

The "crossings" public process has needlessly alarmed a public already concerned about fiscal irresponsibility and government megalomania. Let us outline a few facts which highlight the folly of replacing the existing bridge structure:

- Fact 1:** Population growth on the North Shore is among the lowest of all Lower Mainland communities; there is no demonstrable need for a significant increase in either vehicular or transit access to the area.
- Fact 2:** Although the Ministry of Transport may wish to increase the size of the bridge, there is no commitment at any level of government to improve the already congested traffic infrastructure at either end of the bridge.
- Fact 3:** The bridge structure itself is structurally stable; only the roadbed requires replacement and upgrading. With a few minor modifications [such as hanging the sidewalks on the exterior of the structure] safety concerns can be easily addressed.
- Fact 4:** There is determined public opposition to any option that will further impact on Stanley Park.
- Fact 5:** Residents of the West End will not tolerate any increase in vehicular traffic through their neighbourhood.
- Fact 6:** The least expensive solution to the bridge problem is to fix, rather than replace, the existing suspension bridge structure.

As members of the heritage community, we also protest the steam roller approach of the public process that has been initiated by your government. It seems incomprehensible that the Ministry of Transport's impact studies of 'archaeological and heritage sites in the park'

carefully ignore the most obvious heritage asset and significant heritage issue - the bridge itself. Nowhere does the Ministry acknowledge the heritage importance of the Lions Gate Bridge, in either the terms of reference for the bridge options, or in its literature for the 'Choices' public forum series.

Judging by other recent events, one might be excused for seeing this as a contradiction. At the opening of a new bridge in Castlegar, you presented a British Columbia Heritage Trust Restoration Grant for the rehabilitation of the 1913 Brilliant Bridge, underscoring the message that the government recognizes the significance of historic bridge structures, in the same way that buildings and archaeological sites are recognized. In fact, the Province, through the Heritage Conservation Branch, supports the potential restoration of historic bridges throughout B.C.

So why has your government developed a blind spot when it comes to the Lions Gate Bridge? This is the single most important heritage bridge in the Province. No other bridge in British Columbia is as well-known internationally, or is so often photographed.

Please wake up, Premier Harcourt. Let's not destroy this civic symbol to move a few more automobiles onto already clogged streets, or gain a few more votes at election time. Surely we can do better than this.

Paws off our Lions!

John Atkin
President,
Heritage Vancouver