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Bob Adair, Planner II Facilitator
Enquiry Centre - Development Services
City Hall - East Wing - 2nd Floor
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC
V5Y 1V4

January 26, 2005

Dear Mr. Adair:

Re: Proposed Demolition of Charles Dickens Elementary School, 3351 Glen Drive

I am writing on behalf the membership of Heritage Vancouver to advise you of our concern and disappointment with the lack of consideration which has been shown regarding the option to retain and seismically upgrade Charles Dickens Elementary School. In the opinion of Heritage Vancouver, the option of seismically upgrading this important historic neighbourhood landmark has been almost completely ignored, while the option to demolish it and construct a new building appears to be a *fait accompli* for the Vancouver School Board. Dickens School has been on our Top Ten Endangered List for the past year.

Members of the community and Heritage Vancouver have been frustrated by the lack of information outlining why the option of replacing Dickens School rather than seismically upgrading the existing school seems to have become the desired option. Thus far no substantial or persuasive information has been presented convincing the members of the community or Heritage Vancouver of the need to replace the existing school for reasons of either safety or cost. Additionally, community residents are frustrated by the lack of opportunity to present their desire for retention of the existing school building which is a valuable and revered community asset.

While Dickens School is not listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register, the most cursory of scans of historic information reveal a very rich history which has been ignored. Built in 1912 to the designs of School Board architect Norman A. Leech, it was expanded with a 1925 addition designed by architect F.A.A. Barrs. Similar schools – for comparison Henry Hudson School – are ranked as a “B” on the Vancouver Heritage Register. We respectfully request that before any further thought is given to demolition that a proper heritage evaluation be undertaken by the City of Vancouver or an independent authority.

The issue is: do we have to demolish our historic schools in order to ensure safety in an earthquake? Heritage Vancouver believes that demolition is an "incredibly wasteful and wrong-headed" approach because seismic upgrades can satisfy safety concerns in a cost-effective manner. For example, as reported in the *Vancouver Courier*, a feasibility study on Kerrisdale Elementary School, classified as a Heritage A building, indicated that upgrading would require \$5.8 million, compared with \$7.2 million for a replacement school or \$6.5 million for a smaller capacity school. Heritage Vancouver believes that the Vancouver School Board should identify the best candidates for preservation in terms of architectural and historical importance and develop a comprehensive policy for these older, historic landmarks.

Clearly this matter needs further thought and discussion. I would be glad to discuss this matter further with you at any time.

On behalf of the members and board of Heritage Vancouver, I remain,

Yours Truly

Donald Luxton
President, Heritage Vancouver

Cc: Vancouver School Board
Mayor Campbell and Vancouver City Council members