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December 16, 2008

Mayor Gregor Robertson and Council
Vancouver City Hall
453 W. 12th Ave.
Vancouver, BC, V5Y 1V4

Re: The York Theatre

Heritage Vancouver urges council to reject the staff recommendations outlined in the Administrative report on the York Theatre dated December 8, 2008. We fully support the retention and restoration of Vancouver's York Theatre and wish to thank the community and city staff for their on-going efforts over the past year to achieve this goal. The York Theatre was listed on Heritage Vancouver's 2008 Top Ten Endangered Sites and we have been actively involved in supporting the retention and restoration of this important heritage theatre. We believe strongly that the current staff recommendations will condemn the York to a quick demolition. Asking the Vancouver East Cultural Centre to fundraise two-thirds of the cost of the restoration by mid-January is an impossible task and can only lead to the failure of the project.

We were encouraged with the council decision of September 18 to place a 120-day protection order on the York Theatre to allow the Vancouver East Cultural Centre to complete the work of a Feasibility Study and Operation Plan for the York Theatre. Given the successful outcome of this study we urge the city to come up with alternative solutions to allow this process to come to a positive conclusion and secure the future of the York Theatre as a heritage and cultural facility in Vancouver's Commercial Drive neighbourhood. Given that the protection order is set to expire in the middle of January, we urge City Council to consider innovation solutions to save a heritage building and at the same time provide the city with a theatre of a size that has already been identified as required in Vancouver.

The York Theatre holds a significant place in the history of Vancouver theatre. It is the only purpose-built theatre with a fly tower and proscenium stage on the east side of the city and one of only two or three such early theatres left in Vancouver. Built in 1913 as "the Alcazar" the theatre is an early design of budding architect John McCarter who, with his later partner George Nairne, designed the iconic Marine Building. As home of the Vancouver Little Theatre Association for 54 years, the York has great historical and cultural significance. Over the years, up-and-coming actors such as Dave Broadfoot, Don Gerrard, Joy Coghill and Bruno Gerussi graced its stage.

Thank you for your willingness to further explore this issue, and take positive action that will ensure the future of the historic York Theatre.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "don luxton".

Donald Luxton, President

Cc. Marco D'Agostini, Senior Planner, Heritage Group
Sue Harvey, Managing Director of Cultural Services
Penny Ballem, City Manager
Brent Toderian, Director of Planning