

My name is Robert Hubick and I am a board member of Heritage Regina. I am here this evening to show our group's support for the conservation of Connaught School. I am also personally here as a rate payer, community resident, and friend and supporter of families whose children attend Connaught. In short, I am part of the community this board is tasked to serve as our administrator and steward of public education and public infrastructure.

It has been said on several occasions that this board is only in the business of education. On the other hand, many would argue that education is not a business, but a public service. As such, it is impossible to contain in a narrow, single-purpose silo.

Schools and schooling are deeply embedded in all aspects of family and community life, including how we shape and value our neighbourhoods. They are an integral part of our shared cultural, social and physical environment.

This is why Canada is signatory to an international agreement that affirms the right to preservation of cultural heritage as a human right. More immediately, this is why we have seen so many Connaught parents come forward at public meetings and consultations demanding their school board accept and respect the responsibility it has to uphold a community and its built heritage.

Even parents who live outside the neighbourhood and bus their children to Connaught have come out to speak in favour of a respectful rehabilitation of this heritage school. They understand how the historic nature of the school and its surrounding neighbourhood are a unique, irreplaceable asset to their children's educational experience, one they have actively sought out.

Heritage Regina stands in support of the Connaught school community, which has clearly spoken its preferred option in consultations, petitions, letters and public meetings.

We stand in support of these parents and their community for several reasons:

- 1) Our built heritage can bring a sense of place to a community. In a world of increasingly ubiquitous new buildings, where a redeveloped town centre or community looks *very* much like another, historic buildings by their layout, form and materials can often give an important sense of place and identity that would otherwise be lacking.
- 2) Landmarks - often, historic areas are punctuated with landmark buildings, like the Gastown Neighbourhood in Vancouver, Crescentwood Neighbourhood in Winnipeg, Rosedale Neighbourhood in Toronto, Westmount Park in Montreal and Schmidville Neighbourhood in Halifax. What they all have in common is that they not only include historical homes, businesses and places of worship they all include one or more historical schools. In the case of the Cathedral Neighbourhood, these landmarks consist of Holy Rosary Cathedral, Sacred Heart Academy, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Connaught Library, the Viterra building and many other homes and businesses that provide focal or reference points in the local built landscape. Including Connaught School. Just a quick stat I would like to throw at you, in the Cathedral Neighbourhood there are currently 11 buildings with Heritage status, 42 that are currently on the Municipal Heritage Holding Bylaw list and 33 other properties that have been identified that have Heritage Value including Connaught. There are more heritage buildings in this neighbourhood than any other neighbourhood in Regina.
- 3) On the Human Scale - the local environment is the immediate setting for the lives of people who reside or work there and often historic areas have a human scale that may not be found in areas that have been comprehensively redeveloped around modern means of locomotion such as

motorized transport or according to the notions of modern town planners and property developers.

- 4) Townscapes - historic areas, built with local materials display mature townscape qualities that have evolved over a long period and which are not always easy to achieve in the comprehensive redevelopment of today.
- 5) Intangible heritage - historical buildings, especially schools, are not only about our built heritage it is also about our intangible heritage that these buildings create, it is the memories that are created and the pride you carry with you all your life. I urge you to visit the Connaught Centennial website, at www.connaught100.com, to get a sense of that pride and its role in the promotion of student achievement and self-worth at Connaught.

I would like to point out that Calgary's oldest operating school is also called Connaught. It is LEEDS-certified and has won several awards for architectural innovation. As part of its 2008-09 renovation and LEEDS certification, Connaught teachers and the Calgary Board of Education EcoTeam created a series of educational resources focused on using the environmental features of the school as teaching tools. These were connected to the program of studies learning outcomes for Grades 1-6, and resulted in the creation of numerous videos for student use and community education. A photo gallery of the renovated school is posted on the Save Our Connaught website (<http://saveourconnaught.ca/2013/03/10/historic-school-receives-prestigious-environmental-certification/>). It looks precisely like what many people in our community had envisioned for their school. It is an example of stewardship and leadership.

Indeed, far from being stuck in the past, supporters of rehabilitation and retrofitting are typically innovators engaged in developing new technologies to chart a path to a more sustainable future.

It's no wonder that school board's across North America have taken to calling heritage schools "living labs" for 21st Century education – schools like Connaught call on us to innovate, not demolish, and to embrace diversity and difference, not diminish them.

There are other school boards across this province, Prairie Valley in M.J. and the Saskatoon Public School Board who see the value in preserving their historical schools. Are you saying they are wrong? The U of R campus is currently fundraising to raise funds to renovate the old College Campus. They all see the value that heritage buildings can play in child and adult education. I think it is time this school board re-thinks its strategy when it comes to new builds. The simple answers of the past – to demolish and discard, and to constantly cut and retie community connections – are no longer viable sustainable strategies, culturally or environmentally.

This School board has a history of tearing down significant publicly-owned historical assets, such as Central Collegiate and soon Scott Collegiate. Many schools have been lost and others, like Haultain Community School, are in the imminent path of bulldozers. Connaught represents an 11th-hour opportunity to find a better, more cooperative, sensitive path.

The path you are on now is headed straight toward even deeper controversy and protest as you look toward signature schools such as Lakeview and Balfour.

This is why people across the city have become invested in Connaught's future – the school has become highly symbolic of how our elected leaders treat community input and aspirations, either with disdain and dismissal, or by sharing those aspirations, reaching out and working shoulder to shoulder.

I recently met with the Ministry of Education's executive director of infrastructure, and he thought it was a reasonable request to allow the Save Our Connaught group access to the building to do their own

study. Like many, he did not see why you wouldn't want more information and perspectives on how to tackle the school's needs. At last Tuesday's community meeting, the question was asked again and again: Why won't you seek more than one renovation estimate? As owners of century-old homes, we know how important this is.

You, the board, are elected officials who were voted in by the people and your staff is paid by the taxpayers. In this instance with Connaught School, the community wanted a renovation. Therefore it is the responsibility of this school board to try and honour their wishes, or at the very least do the kind of detailed financial and scientific survey the community wants and in fact is willing to finance as a basis for decision-making.

Heritage Regina understands that not all heritage buildings can be saved, but we feel that every effort should be made to protect these living icons and demolition should only be the last resort.

In the case of Connaught, it is safe to say not every effort was made – in fact there appears to have been very little effort, despite repeated and sustained calls from the community for such an effort to be made. It is time we start changing the attitudes of Regina and Saskatchewan decision-makers that heritage and culture in our communities is important. Once it is gone you can never get it back.

I was also part of a small group that recently met with Katherine Gagne and she said that the board has to consider not only the community but everyone in the city. Last Tuesday night at the public meeting you showed a stat that not only do parents from the Cathedral neighbourhood send their kids to Connaught but many parents from across the city do as well. This tells me that many people in this city value what Connaught can offer to their children the way the school is now.

The school board always says that the education of our children is the most important thing and we at Heritage Regina don't dispute that, but the last time I checked History is still part of the curriculum and what better way to teach history is to actually live and breathe it in your own back yard. Education isn't just about math, English and sciences that are strictly found in books. This school is an opportunity to educate the new generation of emerging heritage conservation with environmental awareness and creative design and development. Some of these children will grow up to be architects, conservationists, historians and this school can be a laboratory for ideas to take shape.

In the feasibility study that was conducted by P3 Architects they stated that the community was overwhelmingly in favour of renovating the existing school as opposed to building new. If the community wanted a new school we wouldn't be having this discussion.

Also in the study P3 along with the engineer, J.C. Kenyon, agreed that further study needed to be done to totally determine the full cost of renovations, but because the school board requires financial numbers to help make their decisions P3 added 35% contingency costs to the rough renovation costs. Without this 35% the renovation would actually be less than the cost of the new build. In another engineering report by BBK, they too indicated that the renovations would be equal to the cost of a new build. But if the costs are going to be equivalent to a new build why wouldn't the school board fix it instead? Not only will you be honouring the wishes of the community but you will also preserving our cities heritage and the community's culture. This school could be a building of pride for the community, the city and for the school board.

We also had a chance to review the last engineering report by J.C. Kenyon and we have questions as well on some of the validity of this report. Not that we want to show any disrespect to J.C. Kenyon: they are

a well-respected engineering firm in the community. But although the firm worked on a few heritage projects, it is not a specialist in heritage buildings.

We at Heritage Regina feel that the school board should do its due diligence and hire an expert in heritage buildings to get his or her perspective on what repairs need to be done and what that might cost. At the very least you owe this to the children who currently attend Connaught school, the community, the ratepayers of this city and to the people who attended Connaught School over the past 100 years. These are their memories and their culture that you will be destroying if this building gets torn down.

This building lies in a historical neighbourhood and people from right across this city come to this neighbourhood to shop, eat and to take in festivals and some of them even transport their kids to the school. If you had to design a school that fits physically and aesthetically into the current site, it would look just like the current building: small footprint, multi-storey, brick construction, mature landscaping. Why not save the bother of trying and likely failing to recreate what you already have? It is a beautiful school appropriate to its setting – work with it, don't destroy it.

By destroying this school not only will you destroy the memories of those who attended in the past but you will also begin the process of destroying this neighbourhood and its unique culture.

We are also encouraging you to allow the Save Our Connaught Heritage group the opportunity to help you make a good financial, moral and scientifically proven decision by giving them the opportunity to do their own testing.

Their report along with the other engineering reports will allow you to make good decisions based on solid facts and respect for people's voices in conservation and management of heritage

So in closing we at Heritage Regina are encouraging the administration and the board of the Regina Public School Board to re-consider their decision of a new build and look instead at renovating Connaught School. This can be done within the Ministry's guidelines, and will relate to how broadly you present a request for proposals if funding is provided. And if funding is not provided, renovating or at least properly maintaining the school is your only option.

Do this not only for the children of Connaught School that currently attend but for the children who will be attending in the future. Don't deny them this opportunity to share in the history and culture of what this school has and can bring.