

\$1 million for Old Vic "ridiculous" says Jack Burnet

The \$1 million figure to restore Victoria Hall is "ridiculous" says former mayor Jack Burnet, and to tear down the old building "would be a disaster."

He criticized the contents of an engineer's report given to Cobourg town council this week, and said that it sounded as if some people wanted to tear down the building.

"It is ridiculous that that great big fine old building would have suspicions cast upon it, or that it is being maligned", Mr. Burnet said. He said that of course repairs were needed and should be undertaken, but that there is nothing basically wrong with its construction.

"The timbers above the opera house are so big and strong, you would have to go to British Columbia to find trees large enough to replace them today," Mr. Burnet said.

Modern engineers tend to work in steel and glass and plastic. "They don't know a damned thing about the old wood construction," Mr. Burnet said. "They are just guessing. They've no experience with wood."

There are detailed plans available for restoring Victoria Hall, made in the 1950's, Mr. Burnet said.

"Why didn't somebody

get them out? They are in the town hall somewhere," he charged.

In the late 1950's, when Mr. Burnet was mayor, proposals were made for repairs to the building, and the plans were submitted to a vote of the people and were turned down.

"But the plans were turned down because some councillors actively campaigned against the

proposals," Mr. Burnet said.

Old Victoria Hall will be standing when a lot of other buildings are in ruins, he said, although it

There must be considerably more investigation and by other firms into the requirements to restore Cobourg's historic Victoria Hall, Deputy-Reeve Mrs. Lenah Fisher said yesterday.

Mrs. Fisher, who has been sick in bed, was not present at the town council meeting which heard a letter from a firm of consulting engineers which suggested repairs might cost \$1 million to restore the building, which was

is reasonable that a proper restoration might cost up to \$200,000 or more, he felt.

Refusing to use names, the ex-major charged that some members of the

present council would like to see Victoria Hall demolished and a modern glass structure erected in its place "for their own greater glorification".

Lenah springs to defense

opened in 1860 by the then Prince of Wales.

"No one should take the say-so of one group," Mrs. Fisher said, "when we call for tenders we ask several people to bid. Similarly, there must be several people invited to suggest means by which Victoria Hall can be preserved. We need more opinions."

"Something has to be done, and we must find the money to do so," she said, urging that advice be sought from restoration architects.

"If additional money is needed, I know the people of Cobourg will pitch in with a financial drive to save their building. I can't see that fine old lady of King St. torn down. She is very dear to me," said Mrs. Fisher.

Victoria Hall cannot be duplicated, Mrs. Fisher said. Potentially, it is one of the town's leading tourist attractions. She quoted Wilf Jury, the man responsible for the development of Ste. Marie at Midland, as saying that Victoria Hall is a great attraction for visitors.