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Worker removes damaged insulation from Laura Secord School attic after \$400,000 fire at school Thursday night.

# School thankful despite fire

By Allison Bray  
Staff Reporter

**T**EACHERS, PARENTS and students at Laura Secord School have a lot to be thankful for this Thanksgiving weekend.

A fire that raged through the school's roof Thursday night left most of the building unscathed, principal Myrna Mitchell said yesterday.

"It's quite emotional. The fact there were no kids in the school was a gift," Mitchell said.

"The time (the fire broke out), the time of year, the location — there's just so many things to be grateful for."

Although smoke, water and structural damage has been pegged at about \$400,000, the fire did not damage any classrooms or

other rooms in the school other than the gymnasium ceiling, Mitchell said.

There were **no** injuries.

Classes will resume as usual Tuesday for the elementary school's 537 students, she said.

The fire broke out about 6 p.m. as teachers were returning to the school from a dinner meeting, Mitchell said.

"They smelled smoke and looked for a source and then the alarms went off," she said.

Mitchell said \$4 million in renovations to the 90-year-old school in 1989 included installing fire-retardant insulation between the drywall and roof.

"The renovations likely prevented the building from going up," Mitchell said.

Deputy fire chief Bill Burton agreed.

"When they made alterations to the build-

ing, they used the right materials."

Although the ceiling over the gym was heavily damaged, the insulation, which lay like a blanket of snow over the charred beams, compartmentalized the fire, Mitchell said.

Other areas in the vast, loft-like attic space were untouched, save for the lingering smell of smoke.

Burton said the cause of the fire is under investigation by the fire commissioner, but that arson is unlikely.

Mitchell agreed, adding the door to the attic area is locked at all times.

She said a professional cleaning company has gone through the building, washing and dusting books and equipment to get rid of any smoke film.