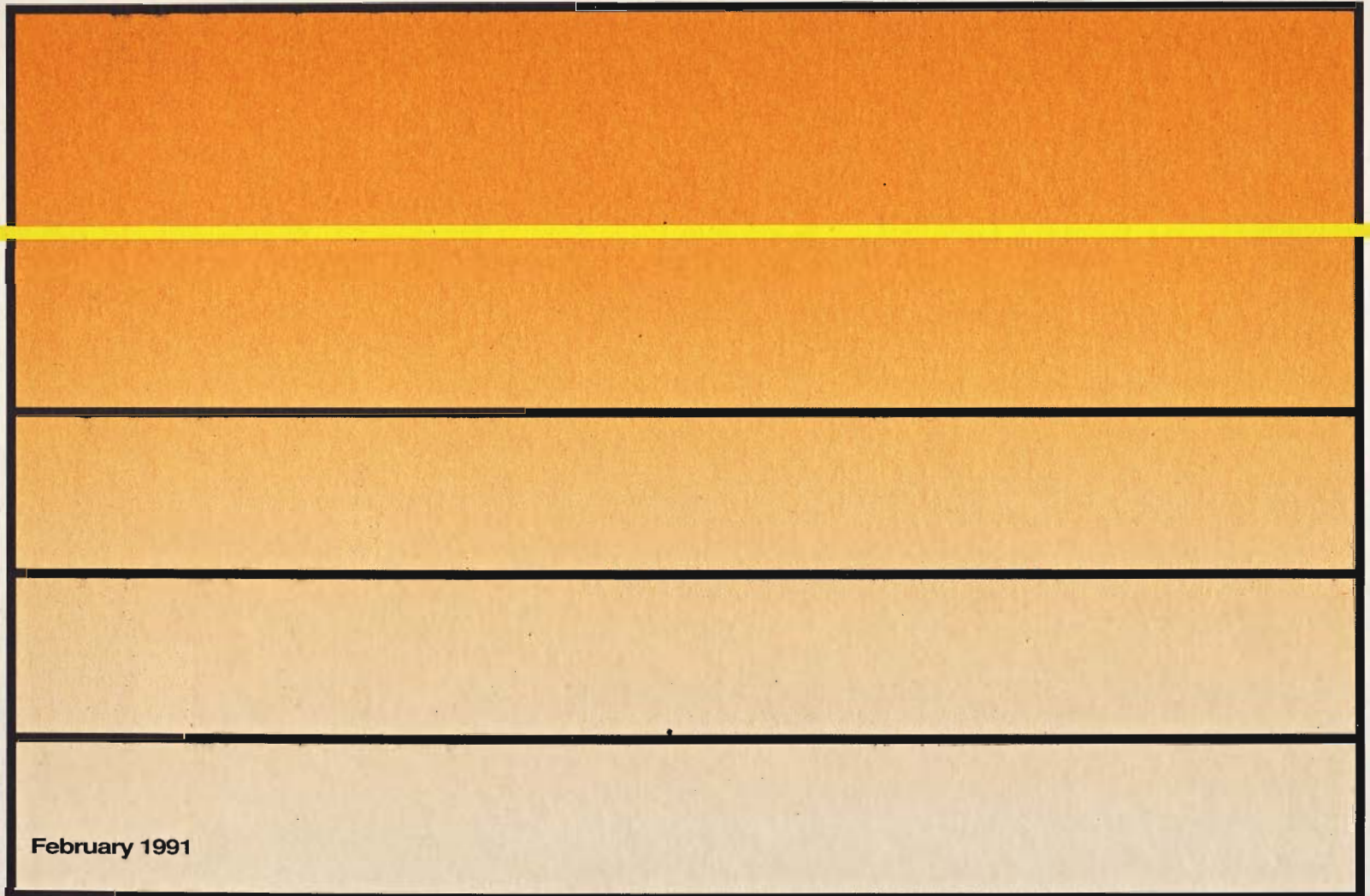




National Capital Commission
Commission de la Capitale nationale

Built Heritage Policy



February 1991

Canada

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I. Introduction

The built heritage of Canada's Capital - the buildings, monuments, roadways and physical remains left by nearly 200 years of human activity - provides a visible record of an important part of the Canadian story and makes a symbolic statement of Canadian identity. The National Capital Commission (NCC) views the protection and enhancement of the Capital's built heritage as an important part of its responsibility to Canadians.

In preserving heritage buildings, the NCC must find solutions that reflect the realities of a growing city. The challenge is to balance the protection of built heritage with the development of the Capital in the interest of all Canadians. The Commission must also concern itself with environmental and archeological protection and must work with its partners in the National Capital Region, often on a basis of creative compromise.

The policies described here respond to the challenge of balancing preservation and development. They guide the decision-making process and help the NCC to arrive at practical solutions for each and every case of heritage preservation.

For more information on the Built Heritage Policy and related corporate policies of the National Capital Commission, please contact:

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II. Heritage and the NCC

Through research, planning, maintenance, and property management, the NCC plays a central role in protecting the Capital's large concentration of heritage properties. For instance, in implementing the Federal Heritage Building Review Policy in the National Capital Region, the Chairman of the NCC and the Minister of the Environment jointly review and approve proposed federal heritage designations in the area.

Heritage Records

The NCC emphasizes research and documentation in the belief that positive action should be based on knowledge, not conjecture. For many years, the Commission has sponsored historical research at the local, provincial and national levels. Indeed, after more than 30 years of work - to say nothing of the work done by its precursors from as early as 1899 - the NCC boasts the largest heritage resource library in the region. A single example: the collection of papers, plans, photographs and articles accumulated over almost a century fills two filing cabinets in the Capital Planning Branch of the NCC and is the finest and most complete source of information on the history of the Chaudière Falls industrial area.

Heritage Inventory

In 1961, the Commission began to prepare an inventory of works, structures and landscapes of architectural and historic significance. Today that inventory numbers some 5,000 files on individual sites, along with a collection of nearly 10,000 slides. Every file contains information collected by NCC researchers over 30 years: some files hold a page or two; others, several volumes.

III. Built Heritage Policy

Heritage Archives

These files are complemented by thousands of archival records, which constitute a rich source of information dating back to the turn of the century. The records include plans, architectural designs and working drawings. The oldest of these documents have now been entrusted to the National Archives of Canada.

The new Built Heritage Policy will govern the effective use of this information so that the National Capital Commission may contribute strongly and decisively to the protection of built heritage in the National Capital Region.

The objective of the Built Heritage Policy is to promote good management of culturally valuable properties in the National Capital Region, to protect them for generations to come, and to enhance their value.

National Value

The policy applies to all property owned or managed by the National Capital Commission and identified as having national heritage value or potential. It also applies to properties with local or provincial heritage value that contribute in some way to the national mosaic. In some cases, the NCC may transfer responsibility for local or provincial heritage properties to another level of government; in other cases, the resource may be incorporated into the cultural landscape of the Capital and may acquire national significance over time. In cases where properties are disposed of, the NCC may attach covenants to ensure their protection.

Partnership

The NCC works with many other agencies and with expert consultants to preserve the Capital's built heritage. Some of the Commission's most successful projects have been carried out with other federal agencies, with other levels of government, with non-profit agencies or with the private sector. Where common goals exist, cooperation is the road to cost-effectiveness, and cooperative projects have enjoyed enthusiastic public support. The Commission also recognizes the innate value of an interdisciplinary approach to heritage preservation.

National and International Context

The Built Heritage Policy was developed in accordance with such international charters as the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO) and the Venice Charter (ICOMOS), as well as with the national and provincial charters and the municipal laws and regulations described below:

1. Appleton Charter (ICOMOS Canada)

Adapts the Venice Charter to a wider range of resources and activities; a primary reference for several provincial governments in Canada.

2. Federal Land Use Plan

Outlines principles for the development of federal land and properties managed by the National Capital Commission.

3. Cultural Resource Management Policy (Canadian Parks Service / Environment Canada)

This policy is now under development and, when adopted, it will constitute the fundamental statement of federal Canadian policy for heritage conservation.

4. Deschambault Declaration (ICOMOS Canada and the Conseil des monuments et sites du Québec)

Stresses the social, political and economic dimensions of conservation.

5. Ontario Heritage Act (Province of Ontario)

Heritage statement of the Province of Ontario.

6. Loi sur les biens culturels (Province of Quebec)

Provides direction for all aspects of heritage protection in the Province of Quebec.

IV. Awareness

The built heritage of the Capital has national significance and forms an important part of the Capital's cultural landscape. To share this heritage with the Canadian public, the National Capital Commission begins by promoting awareness. Existing NCC units - the Communications division, for example - already work to fulfill that role. The challenge of the future is to ensure that heritage and conservation concerns are integrated into all NCC programs. In other words, rather than undertaking major new initiatives, the Commission intends to seize on conservation opportunities in the context of existing programs.

Public Information

The support of the Canadian public is a key factor in the task of heritage preservation. That is why the stimulation of public awareness and interest is the prime concern of the Built Heritage Policy. By informing the public of our heritage resources, the Commission intends indirectly to create an increased commitment to conservation.

Accessibility

Because awareness depends greatly on accessibility, the NCC plans to improve public access to heritage properties in the National Capital Region. In a physical sense, accessibility means that the property is open to the public, or "barrier-free". In a psychological sense, accessibility means making the resource known to the public for its true heritage value through the written, visual and oral media.

Interpretation

Awareness is also enhanced by interpretation and education. The new Cultural Resource Management Policy of the Canadian Parks Service aptly describes interpretation as "the specialized activities by which [an organization] communicates

an understanding and appreciation of the historic value of particular places, things, events and activities to visitors and the public." In subscribing to this view, the NCC effectively commits itself to a kind of cultural tourism. Under the terms of the Built Heritage Policy, the NCC will introduce visitors to the built heritage of the Capital in ways that will enhance their experience of these cultural resources while protecting the resources from undue exploitation.

V. Understanding

Careful research and documentation is the basis for positive action. The NCC aims to promote professional knowledge of conservation issues and also to make the public more aware of the importance of heritage protection and enhancement.

Professional Understanding

Sensitivity and understanding are important in the deliberations of the Federal Heritage Building Review Office (FHBRO) on heritage designations of various properties. Similarly, Commission staff responsible for day-to-day decisions affecting heritage projects must possess a sound understanding of heritage issues.

Public Understanding

Public understanding is also vital to the successful implementation of built heritage programs. It is the public, ultimately, that assigns value to heritage properties, and consensus is the preferred way of proceeding. Existing mechanisms must be complemented by new ways of promoting public interest in heritage programs, in a move towards more broadly based consultative processes.

Cultural Landscapes

The new Built Heritage Policy recommends that the invaluable existing inventory of individual buildings be expanded to include "cultural landscapes", which are groups of heritage buildings that go together to make an integrated cultural statement. Examples in the Capital include Parliament Hill, Major's Hill Park, and the Mile of History along Sussex Drive.

"Heritage Character Statements", which summarize available knowledge about particular sites, are used by the FHBRO in its deliberations. The NCC should adapt the format of these

statements to describe cultural landscapes.

An inventory of cultural landscapes, maintained on an ongoing basis, will be a very useful management tool. The first step in establishing such an inventory is the development of criteria that provide a solid framework for storing and analysing the information collected.

A second management tool will be a new process, similar to that described in the Treasury Board Circular regulating the review of federal heritage sites by the FHBRO. The new process will identify methods for the evaluation, designation and registration of cultural landscapes.

Research and Documentation

The new Built Heritage Policy gives increased importance to historical research, along with rigorous documentation and record-keeping. The tendency in past years has been to carry out work on an "as-required" basis. From now on, continuing research must be built into the process of built heritage management. Study programs must be designed to complete the existing heritage inventory.

Dissemination of Information

To promote wide-spread understanding of heritage issues, information collected by the NCC must be disseminated as widely as possible. The NCC already has a system in place for collecting and cataloguing information and forwarding it to the National Archives of Canada. It may also be desirable to establish systems for sharing information with the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings, le Centre de documentation (Québec City), the Provincial Archives of Ontario (Toronto), and local repositories such as the City of Ottawa Archives.

VI. Protection and Enhancement

The NCC is committed to protecting and enhancing federally-owned heritage properties in the National Capital Region. This it will do both directly, through its own projects, and indirectly, by supporting the work of other agencies.

Long-Term Economic Benefits

Long-term survival of heritage resources takes precedence over short-term economic gain. It is interesting to note, however, that heritage protection and enhancement makes long-term economic sense. Life-cycle costing tends to favour the use of traditional materials such as copper and slate.

Awareness and Understanding

A knowledge of heritage issues is the key to successful intervention. Before the NCC takes any decisions about repair or rehabilitation, it must ensure that the cultural significance of the property is fully understood, and that the intervention is appropriate to the character and value of the property. Deciding whether to intervene, and to what degree, begins with research and continues with extensive committee work and public participation. The craftsmanship that went into heritage buildings is virtually irreplaceable, and work must be based on solid documentation and a firm respect for the past. If accurate information is not available to ensure that the work is done well, the project should be postponed. Current fashions in renovation, including facadism, must be rejected.

Limited Intervention

The most important principle underlying intervention is the principle of "respect". We are led, therefore, to prefer repair to replacement, to respect original materials and to limit intervention as much as possible. The best intervention is usually limited to preventive maintenance or stabilization, or

whatever will have the least impact on the character of the property.

New Construction

Where new construction is envisaged, fake heritage should not replace contemporary design. New elements should be compatible with and subordinate to the historical parts of the building. Compatibility means that although the materials and detailing of the new building differ considerably from the original, the scale, massing and character do not dominate or detract from the older building.

Expert Committees

Most interventions are overseen by special advisory committees - for example, the Advisory Committee on Design - whose size and composition vary with changing requirements. It is recommended that at least two members of each committee be professionals with relevant expertise. In the case of the Committee on Design, for instance, two design professionals should contribute their knowledge and experience to the decision-making process.

Public Participation

The Daly Building demonstrates how deeply the public is already involved in the design and development of heritage properties. Initiatives to involve the public need to be improved and integrated even more fully, however, into the work of preserving and enhancing heritage buildings.

Appropriate Use

The Commission is dedicated to the principle of "continued use", especially in the context of commercial properties such as the

Daly Building, the Chambers Building, and various structures along Sussex Drive. However, care must be taken to ensure that use is appropriate, given the very real danger that inappropriate use, or overuse, will damage or even destroy the resource. Very expensive developments run the danger of being too costly in relation to anticipated benefits.