

## HCF's 2008 Top Ten Most Endangered Places List

The Heritage Canada Foundation released its fourth annual Top Ten Most Endangered Places List on April 30, 2008.

The selection—presented here from the West to East Coast—was compiled from the results of HCF's call for nominations as well as those stories and news items followed throughout the year.

**Church of the Holy Cross  
Lillooet Lake Road, Skatin  
(formerly Skookumchuk), British Columbia –  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE LEFT OUT IN THE COLD**

**Although the federal government is engaged in commemorating Canada's national historic sites, its cost-sharing program to support non-federally-owned national historic sites is nearly dormant and badly under-funded.**

**Since being declared a National Historic Site in 1981, there have been no federal funds to provide support, emergency or otherwise, to the Church of the Holy Cross.**

### Background

Located in the remote village of Skatin on the Skatin First Nation (75 km southeast of Whistler), the Church of the Holy Cross is one of Canada's least known National Historic Sites and perhaps one of its most endangered. Since 2003, the community group Ama Liisaos (Good Angels) has been struggling to raise funds to repair the damaged church after the flooding Lillooet River undermined its foundation and destabilized its steeples.



In recent months a new foundation has been put under the building and the steeples temporarily braced, completing the emergency stabilization phase of the restoration. Almost all of the \$200,000 for this emergency work came from small donations from across Canada. The final three phases of work will address the wooden exterior of the building, safety and sprinkler systems, and roofing, but fundraising for the approximately \$450,000

required is going slowly—the remote location of the church has limited its public profile.

Meanwhile, with every wind or ice storm pieces of siding and decorative woodwork are torn off the church; in April an entire stained glass window and frame fell out of the church tower, but, miraculously, sustained no damage.

Between the mid-1890s and 1905, the people of the Stl'al'inx Nation built this Gothic Revival “cathedral in the wilderness” out of local cedar. None of them had formal carpentry training. Instead, they relied on photographs of the French Gothic cathedrals of Chartres and St. Denis for inspiration. They crafted three delicate steeples, hand-carved the altar, pews and interior detailing, and imported stained glass windows from Europe.

“People who visit the church talk of the incredible sense of peace and power in it,” says local resident Sharon Syrette. “There is a tangible presence in that place, whatever your beliefs.” Five generations of the Syrette family have been baptized there.



### **Old St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church Calgary, Alberta – HISTORIC PIONEER CHURCH LEFT TO VANDALS**

**The future of the church is dependent upon finding adequate restoration funding, the willingness of the Catholic Diocese to support the efforts of the parishioners and community members, and Mountain View Memorial Gardens to be accommodating in the treatment of this historic property.**

#### **Background**

Built in 1904, St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church is the oldest surviving Catholic church in Calgary.



Located on Macleod Trail in the historic Midnapore area, the church and its surrounding cemetery stand as testaments to the pioneer community of Fish Creek and early Alberta religious institutions. The renowned missionary Father Albert Lacombe is believed to have been the first resident priest at the church from 1909 until his death in 1916.

The church building—a Provincial Historic Resource—remains the property of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary which has demonstrated little interest in preserving it. The land, however, is owned by Mountain View Memorial Gardens and Funeral Home which

hopes to remove the church and erect a mausoleum on the site. **Currently, the building is boarded up, deteriorating, and subject to vandalism.**

Unlike many of the early Catholic churches in Alberta which followed Neo-Classical or Romanesque styles, St. Patrick's is built in the Carpenter Gothic style and features wood siding and a pyramidal wooden steeple. In 1874, Father Joseph Jean-Marie Lestanc was sent to St. Albert, where, under the direction of Bishop Grandin, he began a series of postings, mainly to missions in the southern foothills. In 1903, he proposed the construction of a church at Fish Creek (Midnapore), a community that had recently developed along the transportation route between Calgary and Fort Macleod. In 1904 area Catholics erected the church on land donated by Patrick Glenn, son of John Glenn, one of Calgary's pioneer farmers.

The 75-seat church building continued to serve the parish until 1983 when the congregation moved into a new and larger church building. In the early 1990s the land on which the church sits and the cemetery around it were sold to Mountain View Memorial Gardens and Funeral Home with the agreement was that the Catholic diocese would move or demolish the church. The diocese applied for a demolition permit in 2000, but that process was stopped when the province declared the church a Provincial Historic Resource in 2001.

Beginning in the late 1990s, a group trying to protect and preserve St. Patrick's repeatedly tried to gain the support of the Catholic Diocese for their aims. The Old St. Patrick's Preservation Society, a registered non-profit group, was formed in 2006 with the purpose of restoring and preserving the church. Their efforts have been made more difficult by the slow movement of the Catholic Diocese and the undisclosed intentions of Mountain View Memorial Gardens. As yet no structural assessment study has been done on the building, but vandalism is evident and the possibility of fire threatens the building's survival.

### **The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Roundhouse (later CNR Roundhouse) Biggar, Saskatchewan – RARE ROUNDHOUSE ON DEMOLITION TRACK**



**The future of the roundhouse is dependent upon:**

- **overcoming the lack of protective legislation or funding at the national level;**
- **the willingness of the CNR to support the efforts of the local community to protect the railway's heritage; and**
- **finding a suitable new use for the site.**

## Background

Built in 1909 by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTPR), this extremely well-preserved locomotive roundhouse in Biggar, Saskatchewan is the last of its kind on the prairies. In 1908, Biggar was chosen as the site of the largest GTPR station in Western Canada. The town was then made a divisional point, necessitating the construction of the massive circular building to service and store 21 locomotives at a time and prompting a construction and population boom. The GTPR was absorbed by Canadian National Railways (CNR) in 1920.

The roundhouse's current owner and property leaseholder has ensured that it remains in very good structural condition. However, its landowner, the CNR, intends to demolish the building in early 2009 when the lease expires.



The 4,300-square-metre roundhouse has 12-metre fir beams, more than one million bricks and 18 stalls for locomotives. Tunnels have recently been discovered, presumably leading to the nearby railway station. With the advent of diesel engines, and the consolidation of repair and maintenance services at larger Canadian centres, most roundhouses fell into disuse (at one point, Biggar's

was used for grain storage) and were torn down. The only remaining prairie roundhouse similar to Biggar's is in Hanna, Alberta; this 1919 structure, however, is severely dilapidated and half-collapsed.

In the early 1970s the roundhouse was slated for demolition, but the Mayor convinced the CNR to delay for 2 years while a new tenant for the building was sought. The building's long-term future was secured in the winter of 1973-74 when local resident Kevin Kuruluk signed a lease agreement on the use of the land from CNR and purchased the building for \$1 to operate a turkey farm. The Kuruluk family sold the turkey operation in 2005. Their lease on the roundhouse runs out in early 2009 and a clause in it requires the owner to demolish the building at that time. While the CNR may be open to a new potential lease on the roundhouse, it has made no commitments at this point.

In 1995, Biggar's large GTPR station was designated under the *Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act* (HRSPA). The Act, however, does not extend protection to other important railway buildings, including locomotive roundhouses. The Kuruluk family has spent nearly \$500,000 over the years on repair and maintenance to the roundhouse. Using the historic building for food production did not require modifications other than the erection of a few artificial walls, leaving it completely intact. Located on its own 4.3 acre plot of land away from the main



CNR line, the roundhouse does not presently impede railway operations. This separation also makes the roundhouse more adaptable to public uses.

The Mayor of Biggar, Ray Sadler, and many others in the surrounding area, including railway preservationist Tom Cholowski, are mobilizing to save the roundhouse because of its great historical value to the community and the building's uniqueness on the prairies. Current plans envision the roundhouse as a museum, and a collection of artifacts has already been amassed, including the roundhouse's original 1908 blueprints.

An organization is currently being formed to try and find a solution for the future of the roundhouse.

Mayor Sadler and Cholowski have collected over 3,000 signatures—more than the town of Biggar's population—to petition federal protection for the building. Support has also come from railroad societies across Canada. Local MP Carol Skelton (Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar) has brought the petition forward to the House of Commons calling on the federal government to designate the roundhouse as a National Historic Site.

### **Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport Winnipeg, Manitoba – AIRPORT HEADING FOR CRASH LANDING**

**The future of this extraordinary public building is dependent upon it overcoming inadequate protective legislation at the federal level, and the willingness of Transport Canada to support efforts to find an ongoing sympathetic use.**

#### **Background**

Built between 1961 and 1964, the Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport is widely recognized as one of the finest examples of mid-century modern architecture in Canada.

**Originally part of a national network of sophisticated, art-filled air terminals built between 1958 and 1964, Winnipeg remains the only major terminal that has not been either renovated beyond recognition or demolished.** Its future however is in jeopardy. Its owner,

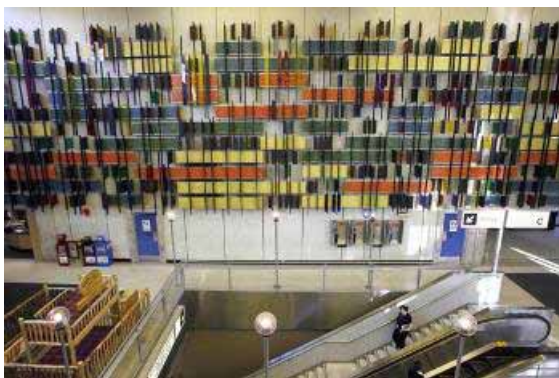
Transport Canada, is currently building a new air terminal that is scheduled to open in 2009. Meanwhile, no solid plans for the reuse of the old terminal have come forward, rumours circulate about possible demolition threats, and as yet the building has no heritage designation protection from any level of government.



The Winnipeg International Airport was built as part of a nation-wide program (including Edmonton, Toronto and Gander) to show Canadians and the world—through the creation of striking architecture—that Canada was a forward-thinking, cosmopolitan nation. Inspired by the 1951 Massey Commission's call for a recognizable expression of "true Canadianism," each terminal was resolutely modern in design, incorporated the latest in Canadian furniture, and evoked the interior of an art

gallery by displaying the largest public art projects ever realized in Canada. Of particular significance in Winnipeg are two massive murals commissioned for the terminal: Eli Bornstein’s “Structuralist Relief in Fifteen Parts”; and John Graham’s “Northern Lights.” The result is a powerful public space which symbolized the national aspirations to make airports into cultural institutions.

The most memorable part of the airport is the passenger concourse, a rectangular pavilion with a clear-span steel structure, glazed on the east and west sides, with solid walls on the north and south ends. Between 1986 and 1994, a renovation and expansion of the building was undertaken, but the approach was very sensitive to the original design and did not impair the character of the building.



In recent decades, the aims of Canadian airport management have shifted away from the “cultural institution” model, to much more pragmatic imperatives like revenue generation and efficiency. Changes in the air transportation industry as well as higher passenger and freight volumes have further undermined the perceived utility of the Winnipeg terminal. Presently, the Winnipeg Airport Authority—which manages the property—claims the building is in poor shape due to years of limited capital investment by Transport Canada.

A recently issued Request for Proposals to reuse the terminal building garnered no response from the private or public sectors. There is growing alarm amongst local architects, heritage advocates and the broader Winnipeg community that this building is on track for demolition.

Currently, the Winnipeg terminal is being considered for federal heritage building designation by the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO). A decision will be made this coming June. Transport Canada has not demonstrated an eagerness to designate any of its buildings. Out of the 1,413 buildings in its Airport Programs, only three have received heritage designation: a hanger in Port Hardy, British Columbia, a hanger in Churchill, Manitoba, and a historic house on the Pickering Airport Lands in Ontario.

But even if the airport receives federal heritage status, its protection is not ensured. FHBRO exists to evaluate heritage value and make recommendations regarding proposed changes or demolition. The policy, however, is non-binding, and is not monitored or reported on and FHBRO does not follow up to determine if its recommendations are followed. The onus is on custodian departments, like Transport Canada, to establish their own processes and standards for compliance.

**Riverdale Hospital  
14 St. Matthews Road, Toronto, Ontario –  
MODERNIST LANDMARK HEADING  
FOR LANDFILL**

**In spite of massive public opposition, the Riverdale Hospital will be demolished to make way for a driveway and a future development site upon completion of a new health facility. The Citizens for Riverdale Hospital**



**continues to look for a solution that is a win for all concerned.**

The efforts to prevent the demolition of Riverdale Hospital have focused on three areas:

- the lack of due diligence regarding **heritage issues** (little heritage evaluation has been done on the building despite numerous requests);
- the **environmental costs** in wasted embodied energy resulting from such a large demolition; and
- **planning problems** related to permitting public land to be privatized.

No analysis of either the financial costs of retrofit versus demolition or the environmental impacts have been considered.

### **Background**

Built in 1963, Riverdale Hospital is a large and important example of mid-century **Canadian Modernist** architecture occupying a striking position on the crown of a hill in Toronto's Riverdale Park overlooking the Don Valley. Bridgepoint Health, who owns the building (the City of Toronto owns the land), has determined that it is no longer suitable for hospital uses. Plans have been drawn up for a replacement facility to be built alongside the Riverdale.



Although two engineering studies (Yolles Engineers and Perkins Eastman Black Architects, both in 2001) have determined that it is structurally sound and well-maintained and adaptable to new uses, **the Riverdale Hospital will be demolished to make way for a driveway and a future development site upon completion of the new facility.**

Architects Howard Chapman and Len Hurst used the curved semi-circular design of the Riverdale Hospital on the rectangular shaped lot to maximize patient interaction with the adjacent park. The building showcases many other important modernist architectural elements including a Japanese terrace garden (designed by landscape architect George Tanaka), steel mushroom-shaped canopies, a 600,000-piece Saico glass mosaic (hand-cut and assembled by the Czech-Canadian artist Margit Gatterbauer), exterior walls of multi-coloured Belgian glass, and projecting triangular bay windows—among others. It remains unique when compared to the design of the city's other institutional buildings.



The building also has the city's only completely accessible community theatre, allowing the disabled to participate in performances and as audience.

Known for its great aesthetic appeal, the Riverdale is considered a landmark building city-wide. It is also a well-preserved landmark—with all major characteristic elements intact.

Architect Jon Van Nostrand evaluated the

building and determined it could be renovated to create 200 much needed housing units, ideal for students, seniors or nurses. Other uses that have been proposed include administrative offices for Bridgepoint Health, medical offices and community facilities. None of these uses has been considered by the building owners. (See <http://www.torarchcons.org/riv.html>)



Bridgepoint Health has submitted applications for rezoning and official plan amendments that will facilitate the demolition of Riverdale Hospital. All have been approved by the City of Toronto.

Concerned citizens, architects, environmentalists and heritage advocates formed the “Citizens for Riverdale Hospital” group. The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario supported the efforts of the group in their unsuccessful Ontario Municipal Board appeal of the hospital plans in the fall of 2007.

This nomination was submitted by the Toronto branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario.

### **The Old Grand Trunk Railway Station (later CNR Station) Montreal Street, Kingston, Ontario – LAST CALL FOR HISTORIC TRAIN STATION**

**Kingston’s first train station remains in critical condition. If the present level of neglect continues, this historically significant site will be lost.**

**It is an all too common example of:**

- **weak federal legislation;**
- **the inability of municipalities to effectively enforce maintenance standards; and**
- **the lack of funding available to property owners who remain stewards of our national heritage**

**Despite the recognition of the station’s importance by all levels of government, concerned citizens, and community groups, a satisfactory arrangement that would lead to the intelligent, adaptive reuse of this site has not been found. The survival of the station and its premises has reached the point where some form of action is critical.**

#### **Background**

Built of solid grey limestone in 1856, Kingston’s first train station was once one of the Grand Trunk Railway’s finest and busiest, serving as a crucial mid-way stopping point along the



shipping and transportation corridor connecting Canada East and Canada West's two major commercial centres, Montreal and Toronto.

As well as the landmark limestone station with its distinctive mansard roof, the site included a number of maintenance buildings, a Royal Mail building, its own water tower and a turntable. Its importance was reflected in the architectural scale and design of the main buildings; by the diverse array of related operational buildings; and by the multiple engineering and maintenance related functions that the site served.



The limestone station and a brick passenger refreshment building, constructed in 1895 to replace a previously existing wooden one, are all that remain on the site.

The Kingston station, also known as “the outer station” remained a critical element in the Canadian National Railway’s operations when it succeeded the Grand Trunk in 1923.

The site also reflected the importance of Kingston as a commercial and industrial centre in its own right. Located two miles north of the city’s downtown (to avoid the land speculation prices of the day), it became the centre of a new sub-community known as Kingston Junction. Houses, stores, schools and churches sprang up to serve railway employees and their families. The original station buildings are counted among the few structures that remain.



The station closed to rail service in 1974 after a new station was opened in the city’s west end. The Clapperton Crystal Company used it between 1975 and 1983. Three years later, in order to provide some measure of protection, the City of Kingston designated the buildings under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. In 1994, the site was designated under the federal *Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act*.

The Pig & Whistle renovated the interior of both buildings to operate a restaurant from 1987 to 1992. It has remained vacant and abandoned since then.

A fire occurred in 1996 while the City was prosecuting CN for violating property standards due to its failure to maintain the premises. The fine was set at \$5,000. After failing to meet two deadlines to make emergency repairs to the 1855 building, the City unilaterally ordered the work to be completed, and charged CN an additional \$10,000 for the expenses it incurred.

In 2003, the City commissioned heritage preservation consultants (André Scheinman and the McCormick Rankin Corporation) to develop a conservation master plan for the site. Although the

original limestone was judged to be in “relatively good condition” it was determined that the extensive damage to the roof, dormer windows and most of the second storey would require reconstruction. The restoration costs were estimated at \$1.6 million, resulting in a proposed “gifting agreement” that would have CN sell the property to the City for \$1, rejected by a newly elected municipal council in 2004.

This nomination was submitted by the Frontenac Heritage Foundation located in Kingston, Ontario. Contact information: Andrew Hill, Director at 613-483-0269.

**BENS Deli Restaurant**  
**990 De Maisonneuve Boulevard, Montréal – LANDMARK**  
**EATERY DESTINED FOR THE DUMP**

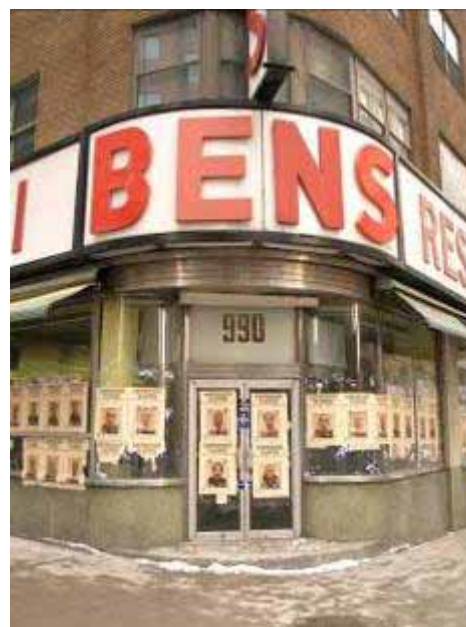
**BENS Delicatessen, a Montréal Art Deco landmark with its famous wrap-around illuminated corner sign, is facing the wrecking ball. Situated on prime real estate, the building has been sold to a developer who has submitted plans to the city for a new 14-storey hotel with a restaurant on the new building’s ground floor.**

**In spite of consistent efforts by Héritage Montréal and the Art Deco Society of Montréal to designate the building, it remains unprotected.**

**Background**

On April 3rd, the City of Montréal posted an intention to demolish notice on the building’s façade. During a public meeting of the Ville-Marie borough demolition committee held on April 21st, the City, while acknowledging the architectural significance of BENS, nonetheless approved the demolition request. The approval stipulated that the restaurant be commemorated in the new structure.

“If the developer had any sense he would just preserve it and build around it. The proposed design has a restaurant on the ground floor anyway,” says Ms. Sandra Cohen Rose of Art Deco Montréal.



The public has until May 21st to contest the committee’s decision to their municipal elected officials.

Ben and Franny Kravitz opened BENS Delicatessen after their arrival from Lithuania in 1908. It moved to its current building designed by Charles Davis Goodman in 1950, where it remained open until 2006.

Visited by thousands of tourists, BENS became the meeting place favoured by luminaries such as Leonard Cohen, former Prime Minister Pierre

Elliott Trudeau, René Levesque and the Montreal Canadiens hockey team. Until 2007, Ben's headed the National Geographic Society's 10 best delicatessens list. Autographed celebrity photos that decorated the yellow Formica and chrome deli, were a significant part of the restaurant's appeal. While the McCord Museum has agreed to preserve the famous restaurant's memorabilia, the Art Deco Society insists this is not enough.

"BENS must be preserved in its entirety, within the framework of any proposed new development," Ms. Cohen Rose states. "Whether used as a restaurant, or any other number of innovative uses, it is an asset to Montréal in history and in revenue as a tourist attraction and movie set."

Montréal's famous deli remains a classic example of Streamlined Modern design as it retains most of its original interior finishes, from the stainless steel coat racks to the sleek deli counter and stools.



"The real estate tycoon who bought it has no idea of what Ben's means to the city," says Pop Montréal's Dan Seligman. "They're just hoping to go in there, destroy it, and that nobody will care. But if people actually do something, we can prevent this from happening. It would be a shame if it is demolished."

Montréal is the first North American city to join the UNESCO City of Design network. Reducing this Art Deco landmark to a few commemorative photos in a replacement building brings into question the city's commitment to urban design values.

Ironically, the International Coalition of Art Deco Societies will be holding their 2009 World Congress in Montréal, May 24-30.

### **Winter Street Prison Sherbrooke, Québec – CRUMBLING BEHIND BARS**

**The future of the Winter Prison complex remains uncertain. This unique historic landmark is succumbing to decay and neglect. Due to its advanced state of disrepair, the *Régie du bâtiment* condemned the building in April 2007.**



**The Winter Prison was saved from the wrecking ball by a local group committed to its rehabilitation and continued community use. Local groups often end up burdened with high maintenance and restoration costs of municipally and provincially significant heritage places.**

**Financial incentives from all levels of government are needed to ensure the landmark’s future viability.**

**Background**

Built in 1865 by Charles Côté following the plans of architect Frederic Preston Rubidge, the stone building is a Palladian-type structure that retains much of its architectural integrity and authenticity.

The prison complex consists of a main building, a unique stone fence penitentiary wall, an interior court, green spaces, the jailor’s house, and a brick building dating from 1940.

The prison is the oldest stone structure in Sherbrooke and the city’s third oldest public building. It continued its original function until 1990, when the prison was moved to more modern facilities.

The *Société de sauvegarde de la vieille prison de Sherbrooke* was created in 1989 in reaction to the threat of its demolition at the time of the prison’s closure. The society is mandated to work with the city and the public to find solutions to ensure the site’s long-term survival and adaptive reuse. In 1997, to ensure its protection, the group bought the prison for 1\$ from the provincial Ministry of culture. [*Ministère de la culture et des communications*].



Even though the local group has been working for almost 20 years to prevent deterioration, neglect and vandalism, it is overwhelmed by the current state of the prison’s significant heritage elements such as the penitentiary wall, the exterior masonry wall and the roof. The society wishes to raise awareness of the urgency of the building’s condition and engage all levels of government as well as the public in helping to bring it up to code.



Although the group has submitted several applications for heritage designation to the Ministry of Culture, little has been done. “The Winter Prison does not seem to be a priority for the provincial government,” notes Daniel Quirion from the society. “It’s now time to act, or else it will be too late for the prison.”

Although the Ministry has invested in numerous studies, the prison is not protected under Quebec’s *Cultural Property Act*. [*Loi sur les biens culturels*]

Sensitive to the heritage character of the site and the public’s appreciation of the complex, the City of Sherbrooke has moved ahead by integrating it into the municipality’s official plans: Plan d’implantation et d’intégration architecturale de la Ville de Sherbrooke.

The local population has become quite familiar with the location as it housed activities of an arts group, *Art Libre* until its recent closure.

Located next to the Magog River in the heart of the old Sherbrooke heritage district, the prison could become the catalyst for the revitalization of the surrounding area for the benefit of tourists and the community.

The *Conseil des monuments et des sites du Québec* has already urged local stakeholders, such as elected officials, the public and the *corporation Sherbrooke, Cité des rivières* to integrate the prison in future revitalization plans. There is a strong will among community members and the municipality to revitalize the area in order to make it “tourist-ready.”

### **St. Patrick’s Church**

#### **2267 Brunswick Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia – A LANDMARK IN LIMBO**

**The church’s predicament underscores the pressures exerted on places of worship by declining numbers of congregants, high maintenance and restoration costs and rising land values in urban areas. The parishioners have taken it upon themselves to save the historic St. Patrick’s Church by raising enough funds to prevent its sale to developers.**



#### **Background**

Located in downtown Halifax, St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church will be closed this June and the parish merged with a neighbouring one, leaving the building’s future at risk. In response, parishioners have formed the “Saint Patrick’s Church Restoration Society” with the goal of raising funds to protect the church and possibly retain its function as a place of worship. A recent professional assessment concluded that the overall condition of the building is good, but the front and the rear elevations are in need of restoration work very soon.

In 2007, the Archdiocese gave the group until June 30 of this year to raise \$300,000 in cash and \$300,000 in pledges—one fifth of the \$3 million it has determined will be required for the repair, future maintenance, and operation of the building. If this fundraising goal is met, negotiations will take place to have the church placed in trust to the Society.



Despite a variety of resourceful fundraising activities, the Society is still only half-way to its goal. If unsuccessful, the Archdiocese is free to sell the St. Patrick’s property to developers who, it is feared, will apply to have the church’s provincial and municipal heritage designations removed to enable the demolition of the building for new development.

St. Patrick's remains a vibrant place of worship with the congregation performing social justice and charity work in the community, renting its basement as a homeless shelter in the winter months and utilizing its sanctuary as a performance space.

Built between 1883 and 1885 with the volunteer labour of Irish immigrants, this richly decorated Victorian Gothic church was designed by architects Henry Peters and George Henry Jost. It houses an 1898 Casavant organ (one of only two remaining from the firm's first 100 instruments) stained glass (four panels of which withstood the Halifax explosion of 1917) and other important art works.

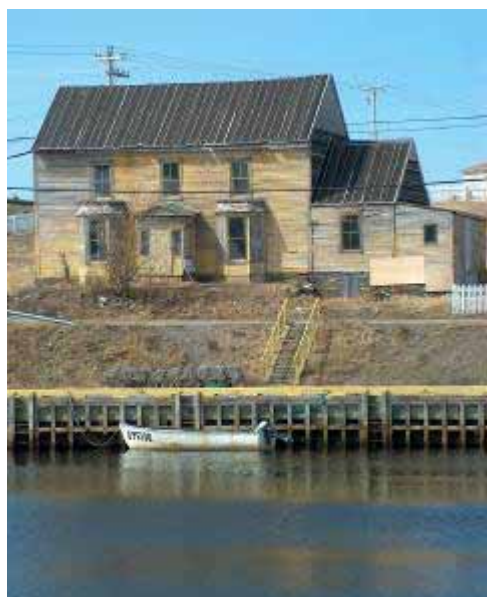
This nomination was made by the parishioners and members of the Saint Patrick's Church Restoration Society.

### **Alexander Bridge House Church Street, Bonavista, Newfoundland – STRUGGLING AGAINST A TIDE OF DECAY**

**All too often, local preservation and historical societies which are mostly run by volunteers are faced with the pressure of saving Canada's built heritage treasures without critical government funding support.**



**“In the past, far too many structures with ties to our rich historical legacy have been taken for granted and allowed to vanish from our midst; with their significance being lost to future generations,” explains the Speaker of Newfoundland and Labrador’s House of Assembly, Roger Fitzgerald. “The Bridge House should be protected to signify the importance of the community’s glory as a major commercial centre, and to stand as a keystone of the heritage district that many residents and groups are striving so hard to preserve.”**



#### **Background**

Built between 1811 and 1814, the William Alexander House (also known as the Bridge House) is the oldest documented residential property in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This important piece of Bonavista's heritage has suffered many years of neglect and decay from physical and environmental damage. Unfortunately, this once “postcard perfect” building has remained vacant and unused by the community since 1966.

Accented by a natural stone foundation, the Alexander home features gable end chimneys, a central hallway, and a highly symmetrical design. The house is situated on Walkham's hill and was owned by William Alexander who came from Argyleshire, Scotland to start a mercantile business (Alexander

and Co.) in Bonavista. He died in 1828 and was laid to rest in the family plot in the old Anglican Cemetery nearby.

The building was designated by the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador as a Registered Heritage Structure in 1986, and emergency funding was approved to stabilize the building



and to install a temporary roof until further restoration efforts could be made. The temporary repairs, however, eventually failed and water penetration continued to damage the structure.

“It is indeed a significant part of Bonavista’s history,” notes Bonavista’s mayor, Betty Fitzgerald. “If it is not preserved in the very near future, it will be beyond repair.”

Hoping to prevent a demolition by neglect, the Bonavista Historic Townscape Foundation bought the designated historic site in 2001. A short time later, the Society engaged Newfoundland architects Sheppard Case Ltd. to complete “as found” drawings of the structure and to consider options for conservation and redevelopment. With the assistance of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and the former Human Resources Development Canada, the Bonavista Historic Townscape Foundation replaced all the deteriorated roof

sheathing with new pine and replaced rotting timbers. The decaying chimneys were removed to the roof line and the fragile third storey dormer windows were dismantled and placed inside the building.

In an effort to prevent further water damage to the foundations, Sheppard Case recommended excavating around the site for the installation of a new drainage system. Recognizing the potential damage this could cause to the historic site, the Society delayed in order to arrange an archaeological survey. Financial support finally came through the provincial government under its Cultural Economic Development Program. The work on the survey and the new French drain will proceed this spring.

Gordon Bradley, president of the Bonavista Historical Society, stresses however that the Bridge House needs much more. “It requires significant resources to properly address this structure and to ensure that it is conserved and redeveloped in the best possible manner. The province’s oldest surviving house deserves nothing less.”

This nomination was submitted by the provincial Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development.