



NATIONAL HISTORICA FAIR, VICTORIA, 2008

# A Call to Renew British Columbia's Heritage Program

Heritage BC





VICTORIA'S CHINATOWN, A NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

“Heritage BC is calling on the provincial government to renew British Columbia’s heritage program before it is too late.”

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# A Call to Renew British Columbia's Heritage Program

Heritage BC is calling on the provincial government to renew British Columbia's heritage program before it is too late. At one time regarded as one of Canada's best, the program has been in decline for years, and the latest cuts have brought the situation to the tipping point. Only a determined and timely commitment to renewal can protect the future of heritage in British Columbia. Heritage BC is calling on the provincial government to take several steps:

### **Adopt the Provincial Heritage Strategy**

Adopt the draft British Columbia Heritage Strategy to reaffirm commitment to conservation and renew confidence in the future.

### **Restore the Heritage Branch Budget**

The Heritage Branch is the provincial agency that implements government heritage policies and administers essential programs, but drastic cuts have seriously undermined its capacity to deliver on these responsibilities. The Heritage Branch budget must be restored.

### **Resolve the Heritage Properties Question**

The series of historic sites known as the Heritage Properties has become a chronic problem and a drain on energy and resources. The government must resolve the Heritage Properties question so that it can address other urgent issues in the heritage file.

### **Restore Community Support**

The 'B.C. approach' to heritage conservation devolves substantial responsibilities to the local level. A restored heritage program budget must restore services, funding and encouragement to local government and community heritage organizations.

### **Invest in the Heritage Legacy Fund**

A further investment of \$5 million is required to generate the necessary income to maintain the status quo and meet current responsibilities, including the support of Heritage BC. To respond to the growing demand for community support would require an investment of \$10 million.

“Only a determined and timely commitment to renewal can protect the future of heritage in British Columbia.”



BENVOULIN HERITAGE CHURCH, KELOWNA

## BACKGROUND

# B.C.'s Heritage Program

Heritage conservation ensures that the legacy of the past will be preserved for the future.

We rely on many experts and specialists to conserve our heritage: curators and conservators in museums and archives; architects, engineers and skilled craftspeople maintaining and restoring our historic buildings and landmarks. But preserving our legacy depends on more than specialized skills and expertise. We must have enlightened policies and legislation. There must be adequate funding, backed by public support and political will. Without them, our heritage will be lost.

## A Provincial Responsibility

In Canada, heritage conservation authority lies mainly with the provinces and territories. This means that the Government of British Columbia has a profound responsibility to ensure that our heritage is preserved for the future.

Since 1925, the province has enacted legislation to protect and conserve heritage resources. With the Heritage Conservation Act in 1977 and the Heritage Conservation Statutes Amendment Act of 1994 the province provided the critical legislative 'tool box' to enable and promote heritage conservation in British Columbia.

Through the Heritage Branch of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, the provincial government delivers a number of services and programs that are essential to heritage conservation:

- Policy development and strategic planning
- Technical expertise
- Issues analysis and management
- Funding
- Standards and guidelines
- Education and training
- Special projects and initiatives
- Outreach and support
- Intra- and inter-governmental liaison
- Oversight of the provincial Heritage Properties



FORMER HERITAGE MINISTER THE HONOURABLE BILL BENNETT (LEFT) TOURS THE BUTTERFIELD COTTAGE AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE



HISTORIC FORT STEELE IS ONE OF THE HERITAGE PROPERTIES

# The B.C. Approach: Community-based Heritage Conservation

Since the 1970's, a substantial part of the responsibility and authority for heritage conservation has been devolved by the provincial government to the local level. This "made in B.C." approach is based on the belief that each community knows its own heritage best, and should decide what will be conserved, and how. Beginning with the Heritage Conservation Act of 1977, local government has been given a leadership role, backed by community awareness and approval, and supported by community heritage institutions and associations.

British Columbia's community-based approach emerged in response to a growing sense of urgency to protect and preserve our dwindling heritage resources. With new powers and encouragement from the province, local governments created heritage programs and established citizen-based heritage advisory committees. Studies and plans were undertaken and programs were launched. Heritage societies were formed. Publications, special events and celebrations raised awareness. A number of public and private buildings were restored and rehabilitated, stimulating the local economy and raising community pride. In partnership with provincial and national programs, many communities engaged in Mainstreet programs and heritage area revitalization, bringing new life to historic commercial districts and boosting tourism.

## Connecting Communities: Heritage BC

To connect these emerging community heritage programs and give them a united voice, the Heritage Society of B.C. was formed in 1981.

Heritage BC provided communication, education, networking and support. The new association also became the provincial advocate for the heritage conservation movement. Membership grew rapidly, soon reaching its current strength of 170 Group Members.

Today, over 85 per cent of Heritage BC's member groups are local heritage associations. Conferences and meetings bring members together to learn, share experiences and renew their collective sense of purpose. Workshops and courses deliver information and teach skills. A newsletter, website, and e-news service provide information, discussion and analysis of issues, and a provincial perspective. Special events such as Heritage Week create unique opportunities for celebrations, and the society's awards program honours achievement and community service.

Over a quarter of Group Members are Community Heritage Commissions and local governments which form such an essential part of the community-based approach, and Heritage BC has developed unique programs and services to meet their needs.



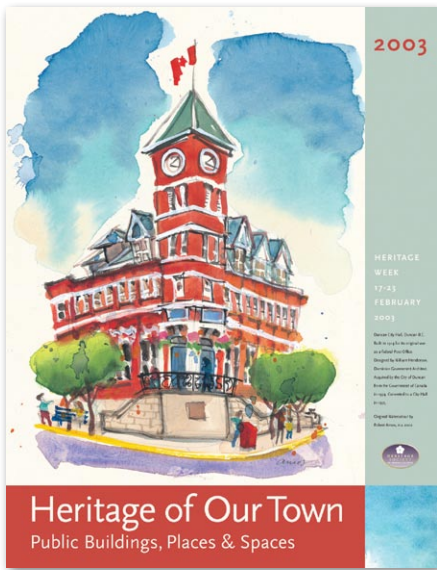
A COMMUNITY HERITAGE CONTEXT PLANNING EXERCISE UNDERWAY



HERITAGE BC'S NEWSLETTER, THE "QUARTERLY"



THE HONOURABLE MARY POLAK PRESENTED THE 2008 BRITISH COLUMBIA HERITAGE AWARD TO MURPHY SHEWCHUK OF MERRITT



2003 HERITAGE WEEK POSTER FEATURED DUNCAN'S HISTORIC CITY HALL



CONSERVATION WORK ON THE VERNON SCHOOL OF MUSIC BUILDING WAS ASSISTED BY A GRANT FROM THE HERITAGE LEGACY FUND



MEETING IN MISSION

Heritage BC also takes its message to the public. The awards program publicizes exceptional heritage projects and achievements. The annual Heritage Week theme features a distinctive aspect of British Columbia's history. A thousand copies of Heritage BC Quarterly newsletter are widely circulated four times a year.

The creation of Heritage BC was encouraged and facilitated by the provincial government. Emerging at the same time with many goals in common, the provincial heritage program and Heritage BC have worked together whenever possible. This 30-year history of cooperation has been formalized through a series of agreements and joint initiatives, and characterized by a daily working relationship. Between 1989 and 2009 the provincial government contributed core funding support to Heritage BC that ensured continuous, reliable service to member organizations and others.

## Investing in the Future of Our Past: The Heritage Legacy Fund

Funding is a critical component of the community-based approach to heritage conservation. The British Columbia Heritage Trust, a provincial crown corporation, was established in 1978 and for 25 years provided financial support to many hundreds of heritage initiatives throughout the province.

With the termination of the Trust in 2003, Heritage BC and the Land Conservancy of BC established a new, non-government agency, the Heritage Legacy Fund, with an endowment of \$5 million from the provincial government.

With the earnings from the endowment, the Heritage Legacy Fund is able to offer financial assistance to community organizations and local governments for a variety of projects and initiatives. In its first five years the Heritage Legacy Fund has provided critical financial support to nearly 100 projects in 60 B.C. communities.

## Summary: A Cooperative Approach to Community-Based Heritage Conservation

British Columbia has evolved a distinctive approach to heritage conservation. Provincial agencies, including the provincial government, Heritage BC and the Heritage Legacy Fund, have worked in close cooperation to provide a foundation of support to enable B.C. communities to discover, understand, and conserve their heritage.

## THE PRESENT SITUATION

# A Crisis for Heritage Conservation

B.C.'s heritage program is in a state of crisis. A series of cuts and cancellations over several years has seriously compromised the provincial government's critical role in heritage conservation. While the economic downturn lies behind some recent decisions, this dire state of affairs is in fact the end point of an extended period of attrition.

Many provincial government heritage programs and services have been eliminated. The relationship with Heritage BC has been severely strained by the abrupt termination of funding last year. Government financial assistance for community heritage initiatives and associations has also been reduced or eliminated. To offset the impact of government cuts, the Heritage Legacy Fund has been compelled to assume onerous new responsibilities, even while its revenues are shrinking.

## Provincial Government Program Stripped

The Heritage Branch budget has been stripped of essential programs and services that were a keystone in the support framework for community-based heritage conservation. Local government has no alternative source of support for these functions.

## Heritage BC Funding Terminated

After 20 years, provincial funding support for Heritage BC was abruptly terminated in 2009. When gaming funding was also cancelled, Heritage BC shut down for three months, and is currently dependent on the Heritage Legacy Fund, which is diverting dollars intended for community grants.



ENERGY CONSERVATION IN HERITAGE BUILDINGS IS ONE ISSUE THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AND HERITAGE BC HAVE COOPERATED ON



THE HISTORIC SIKH TEMPLE IN ABBOTSFORD RECEIVED AN AWARD FOR CONSERVATION FROM HERITAGE BC THIS YEAR



WWW.HERITAGEBC.CA



CONSERVATION OF THE CLAYBURN VILLAGE SCHOOLHOUSE WAS ASSISTED BY A GRANT FROM THE HERITAGE LEGACY FUND



TOURS ARE A REGULAR PART OF HERITAGE BC CONFERENCES



HISTORIC CEMETERY IN THE KOOTENAYS

## The Heritage Legacy Fund: Fewer Dollars, More Responsibilities

As a result of the economic recession, Heritage Legacy Fund annual earnings are down by 40 per cent. At the same time, demand for community grants is on the increase. With the Heritage Legacy Fund now also supporting Heritage BC, it has been necessary to reduce the community grants budget by almost half, which was exhausted within the first two months of the current fiscal year. Next year, either funding for Heritage BC or grants for communities will have to go, unless prompt action is taken.

## The End of Gaming Funds

Gaming grants, a critical source of funding, have largely been eliminated for community heritage organizations.

## The Heritage Properties: A Chronic Problem Looking for a Solution

In 2002, the provincial government made the decision to devolve the collection of provincial historic sites known as the Heritage Properties to local managers. Devolution has been a mixed success at best. A government-commissioned report in 2007 (“Provincial Heritage Properties Sustainability Study”) revealed that most properties are chronically underfunded and continue to struggle. New investment by the provincial government last year bought some time, but at the cost of all other heritage priorities. This year, the Properties are once again the government’s principal concern and preoccupation.

A lasting solution must be found, for the sake of both the Properties and heritage conservation in B.C.

## A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

# A Call for Renewal

The provincial government has a duty of stewardship for our heritage resources. In the past, when this duty has been fulfilled heritage conservation has prospered.

At present, heritage conservation is not prospering. To get the provincial heritage program moving again, a number of things need to happen:

### **Adopt the Provincial Heritage Strategy**

Two years ago, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts launched an initiative to create a British Columbia Heritage Strategy. Adopting this strategy now would be a first step toward charting a new course for heritage conservation in British Columbia, and spark renewed confidence in the future.

### **Provide the Heritage Branch with Essential Resources**

The Heritage Branch is the essential provincial agency for the implementation of government heritage policies and the administration of programs. It is the backbone of provincial government support for community-based heritage conservation in B.C. Budget cuts have seriously undermined the Branch's capacity to deliver on these responsibilities. The Heritage Branch must be restored so that it can again provide the services and programs to British Columbia's heritage program.

### **Resolve the Heritage Properties Question**

The provincial government continues to be preoccupied with the management of the Heritage Properties, at the expense of other priorities. A complete makeover of the system is once again under consideration. Heritage BC would support a new stewardship model that provides a long-term solution to the Heritage Properties question and allow other urgent heritage issues to receive the attention they require and deserve.

### **Restore Community Support**

The community-based approach to heritage conservation cannot be sustained by communities working alone. Devolving heritage conservation responsibilities to local governments and community heritage organizations must be backed up with significant levels of support. A revitalized Heritage Branch must include advisory services, programs and funding for governments and other local agencies. Provincial gaming funding to community heritage organizations should be reinstated.



ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH, KASLO  
(TRUSTEES OF ST. ANDREW'S)

“To get the provincial heritage program moving again, a number of things need to happen.”



THE FLACK BLOCK, VANCOUVER

“For the Heritage Legacy Fund to continue supporting Heritage BC and providing grants to communities, there must be an increase in the endowment.”

## Invest in the Heritage Legacy Fund

For the Heritage Legacy Fund to continue supporting Heritage BC and providing grants to communities, there must be an increase in the endowment:

### **\$5 Million Contribution**

A contribution of \$5 million from the provincial government to the Heritage Legacy Fund would bring annual income to \$380,000, at the current rate of earnings set by the Vancouver Foundation which holds the Fund. This would allow financial support for Heritage BC at 20 per cent below former levels, and a grants program budget of \$200,000, also a 20 per cent reduction, plus administrative costs. By way of comparison, this grants budget would be in line with that of the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, which serves a population of about one quarter the size of British Columbia.

### **\$10 Million Contribution**

A contribution of \$10 million would generate an income sufficient to fully replace provincial government funding to Heritage BC, sustain the grants budget at \$250,000, and support a fund development capacity to grow the Fund.

## Conclusion

The surest way to destroy an historic resource is to abandon it. This is known as “demolition by neglect”.

For years, British Columbia’s heritage program has been suffering from neglect, and has now reached the tipping point. Only a strong commitment to restoration can bring it back. It is time for the Government of British Columbia to take decisive action.

A revitalized heritage program will be a sound investment, a boon to B.C.’s diverse and growing tourism industry, and a commitment to a sustainable future. Most importantly, it will fulfill the pact with the people of British Columbia to protect, conserve and honour our irreplaceable heritage.



FIGGARD LIGHTHOUSE  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

“A revitalized heritage program will be a sound investment, a boon to B.C.’s diverse and growing tourism industry, and a commitment to a sustainable future.”

# Heritage BC



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