

Editor's View

Increasingly, historic churches, synagogues and other places of worship across the country—both urban and rural—are threatened with deterioration and demolition. The reasons are many: shrinking congregations, years of deferred maintenance, shifting demographics and rising urban land values. As a result, many iconic places of worship are disappearing from our communities.

The importance of religious buildings often extends beyond congregations. Doors are opened for neighbourhood activities and social services, adding cultural and social value to the religious value of these places. Our feature article “Preserving Religious Buildings—The Next Great Struggle for Heritage Conservation” looks at some of the challenges facing historic places of faith in Prince Edward Island.

For many congregants, keeping a historic religious building standing even after its doors are closed to worshippers is preferable to demolition. The challenge is in finding a new use through a conversion that is sensitive to historic building fabric and open to public access. Our other feature article is a case study of how effective municipal government can be in facilitating this kind of project; turn to page 6 for “Québec City's Role in Saving Churches: Recycling Saint-Esprit.”

In keeping with this issue's religious heritage theme—and as part of HCF's 35th anniversary year—the Nuts and Bolts section presents an article on the conservation of stained glass windows that first appeared in Canadian Heritage magazine some 20 years ago. The few changes in approach since then are captured in the sidebar “Where It's At in 2008!”

Our Top Ten Endangered Places and Worst Losses lists were released this past spring to much media and public attention. They are included here beginning on page 38.

Please stay in touch. Keep your letters and emails coming! I can be reached at cquinn@heritagecanada.org or by calling the foundation.