

# **Municipal Planning Pressure Points**

**“Fitting in, under pressure”**

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## Origins: 1970s

- ❑ *New Ontario Heritage Act 1975*, administered by new Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation.
- ❑ Mid 1970s and early 1980s many municipal heritage issues were generally managed by Culture and Recreation Departments.
- ❑ Followed the lead of the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation.

## **Origins: 1970s (continued)**

- Emphasis on historical sites and museums.
- Managers of facilities generally unfamiliar with the policy and regulatory aspects of heritage conservation planning and associated legislation.
- Early 1980s impacts of progressive environmental legislation start to filter through to municipalities.

## **Emerging trends: 1980s to 1990s**

- ❑ Mid 1980s recognition of “matters of provincial interests” in a revamped Planning Act, 1983.
- ❑ “the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest”.
- ❑ Introduction of supporting provincial policy statements.

## **Emerging trends: 1980s to 1990s**

- ❑ General trend for heritage conservation and heritage planning activities to be incorporated into municipal planning departments.
- ❑ Fitted into fields of long range policy planning, community planning and urban design, and regulatory nature of development planning, approval and permit processes.

## **Fitting in: The Hamilton experience**

- ❑ 2001, City of Hamilton, newly amalgamated municipality comprising 6 former local municipalities and 1 former regional municipality.
  
- ❑ Traditional downtown historical core, Niagara Escarpment, waterfront, rural villages and hamlets, expansive agricultural landscape.
  
- ❑ Fully staffed and newly formed “Heritage and Urban Design Section” part of the Long Range Planning and Design Division (2001-2003).

## **Fitting in: The Hamilton experience (continued)**

- ❑ 2004, Heritage and Urban Design Section disbanded, “group” folded into Community Planning and Design Section.
- ❑ Community Planning and Design Section then transferred into Development Planning and Real Estate Division.

## **Fitting in: The Hamilton experience (continued)**

- ❑ Community Planning and Design Section then transferred into newly formed Planning Division.
- ❑ Planning Division comprised two sections “Development Planning” and “Community Planning and Design”.
- ❑ 2012, Heritage planning staff recently transferred out of “Community Planning and Design” into “Development Planning”.



## **Fitting in: The Hamilton experience (continued)**

- ❑ In the space of 11 years heritage planning went from being part of a long-term, visionary, City-building initiative to heritage being a minor part of a “reactive” development plans review function.

## Under pressure: Two examples

- ❑ Senior management tended to cite the concept of balancing “heritage conservation” needs with other areas of the Planning and Economic Development Department’s portfolio.
- ❑ Economic development, downtown renewal, real estate, development planning and other related interests always seemed to have greater priority and overwhelmed “heritage”.
- ❑ Measures of municipal progress and advancement seen as: building permits issued, residential units constructed, hectares of “shovel ready” serviced land available or created, cranes in the sky, etc.

## **Under pressure: Two examples (continued)**

- Measures of progress and achievement were rarely “heritage” measures.
- Heritage not perceived as part of economic development, downtown renewal, or sound development planning.
- The Lister Building and the Federal Building.

## **Under pressure: Two examples (continued)**

- Lister building: OHA designated, Part IV, vacant commercial building, the “barometer of Downtown”.
- Heritage permit for demolition granted by City Council on advice of senior management.
- Approval for a “replica” building, contrary to heritage committee and heritage staff advice.
- Resulting political process saw one councillor break ranks with Council decision.
- Requested designation by Ontario Minister with building ultimately conserved and protected.





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## **Under pressure: Two examples (continued)**

- 2011, Former Federal Building threatened with demolition, proposed for designation by heritage committee and supported by heritage staff.
- Recognised by Parks Canada as having heritage value in the 1990s.
- Senior management recommended against designation by Council.
- Rationale: 11<sup>th</sup> hour designations send out wrong message to the development community.
- Contrary view: 11<sup>th</sup> hour demolitions send out wrong message to the heritage community

## Under pressure: Two examples (continued)

- ❑ Remnant still standing due to “surprise” Federal easement announced at Planning Committee.
- ❑ Ontario office of Public Works and Government Services Canada advised new owner that he signed a covenant when he bought the building promising to “conserve, protect and maintain” the heritage features of the building.
- ❑ Outcome still unknown, frontispiece contained in facade still standing, contains eight bas relief sculptures by notable sculptor Elizabeth Holbrooke.
- ❑ Represent four resource-based industries: mining, lumbering, farming and fishing; and four iconic Canadian animals — Canada geese, beavers, caribou and black bears.











## Under pressure: Final comments

### Role of municipal heritage planning staff:

- independent, professional advisors to Council.
- cannot take advocacy approach.
- must provide advice on legislation, principles and best practice.
- maintain a professional relationship with Councillors.
- in public arena (Council and Committee meetings), speak when spoken to.
- staff provide information that feeds the Councillor's debate but do not debate...however tempting.



# Thank you

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