

NATURAL PARTNERS:

*Heritage Preservation and
the Environmental Movement*



HERITAGE CANADA FOUNDATION

The Heritage Canada Foundation
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Heritage Canada Foundation offers this discussion paper to promote closer working relationships with environmental groups. We believe that heritage preservation and the environmental movement are natural partners. Together they can bring fresh approaches and greater commitment to protecting and enhancing Canada's environmental inheritance.

Established in 1973, the Heritage Canada Foundation is a national, non-governmental organization and registered charity with Crown trustee status. It encourages Canadians to protect and promote their historical, architectural, natural and scenic heritage. The Foundation is a membership-based organization; members elect a twelve-person Board of Governors.

As the Foundation pursues new alliances with environmentalists, it will be guided by its two broad corporate goals: improvement in public policy for heritage conservation at all levels of government; and enhancement of public outreach and education, both formal and informal, to raise heritage awareness.

Within this context, the Foundation seeks partnerships that are based on mutual gain, are results-oriented, and can be funded by outside sources or through contributions-in-kind or both.

We have identified promising opportunities for collaboration with environmental organizations in four areas. These include: waste management; urban regeneration; landscape conservation; and environmental education.

The Heritage Canada Foundation welcomes comments on this document and invites suggestions for collaborative initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

The Heritage Canada Foundation (also known as Heritage Canada) is a national, not-for-profit organization and registered charity with Crown trustee status. It was incorporated in 1973 to encourage Canadians to protect and promote their historical, architectural, natural and scenic heritage. In a word, the focus of this mandate is place, in both its physical and societal dimensions. The Foundation is a membership-based organization. Members elect a twelve-person Board of Governors, one from each province and territory.

Until recent years, those who supported heritage preservation and environmental protection were often divided. There were exchanges of sympathy and sometimes overlapping constituencies. But essentially, the two were seen as different causes. Now, however, there is a growing recognition that preservationists and environmentalists are natural allies. They often seek to safeguard the same resources, face the same adversaries and share a mutual commitment to an enhanced quality of life and ecosystem health.

Working in concert with environmentalists is nothing new for the Foundation. In the 1980s we undertook research and participated in advocacy activities on the issue of acid rain, particularly concerning its destructive effect on the built environment. The campaign, skilfully spearheaded by environmental groups, was directly responsible for the agreement between Canada and the United States to control emissions of sulphur dioxide causing acid precipitation. Since 1978, our Main Street program, designed to be a catalyst for downtown revitalization, has induced several communities to develop design guidelines to further the preservation and enhancement of street vegetation, parklands and natural areas. Similarly, over the last decade the Foundation's Heritage Regions program has helped rural areas care for and make the most of natural and cultural heritage assets. On another front, the Foundation collaborated with the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada on a widely disseminated publication entitled, *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism*. And, recently we joined urbanists and environmentalists in advocating alternatives to city sprawl by publishing in our magazine a series of feature articles on the topic. Versions of one of these, "Tackling Superstore Sprawl", also appeared in two major Canadian daily newspapers – *The Globe and Mail*, national edition, and *The Gazette*, Montreal.

We believe that it is timely for the Foundation to make a public statement on its particular interest in pursuing collaborative initiatives with environmental groups throughout Canada. This decision follows upon a corporate re-evaluation and renewal process that identified partnerships, both existing and new, amongst the principal ways and means of achieving the Foundation's two broad goals: 1) Public Policy and Programs; and 2) Public Outreach and Education.

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The Heritage Canada Foundation has a tradition of working in partnership with others, including the not-for-profit, public and private sectors. We are committed to strengthening existing partnerships and to developing new alliances.

With public policy, the Foundation aims to gain improvements respecting those initiatives at all levels of government that have an impact on heritage, including custodial roles, financial assistance and other incentives as well as regulatory matters. We see this as a particularly crucial goal given the growing orthodoxy for smaller government and consequent uncertain times for both the environmental and heritage causes.

Our aim with public outreach and education is to build among Canadians a larger constituency of interest in heritage. This is essential for raising the profile of heritage conservation on the public policy agenda. Equally important, it is vital for increasing the value society attaches to its environmental inheritance and consequently the benefits that accrue from good stewardship of this legacy. Target audiences have been identified within schools, post-secondary educational programs, mid-career training opportunities for professionals, and skills development initiatives for volunteers and others.

In order to stimulate discussions with environmental groups, the Foundation states below its principles regarding partnerships, and outlines four topics where we believe we share common ground. These topics are by no means definitive or mutually exclusive. The Heritage Canada Foundation believes that active dialogue will lead to a stronger alliance between heritage preservation and the environmental movement and better equip both to meet today's challenges.

PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

The Heritage Canada Foundation has a tradition of working in partnership with others, including the not-for-profit, public and private sectors. We are committed to strengthening existing partnerships and to developing new alliances.

The Foundation believes that partnerships are alliances for mutual gain. Success depends on complete trust and openness between partners and the joining of forces for a common aim. Joint undertakings, therefore, will be relevant and results-oriented. And, outcomes will be evaluated to ensure accountability to the partners, outside sponsors, volunteers and affected constituencies.

Collaborative initiatives entered into by the Foundation are funded by outside sources or through contributions-in-kind from each party involved, or a combination of both. As a matter of policy, the Foundation does not make grants to individuals or other organizations.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

WASTE MANAGEMENT

There is a particularly good fit between the environmentalists' credo of the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) and its adaptation in the preservationists' 3Rs (retain, renovate, repair). Conserving our existing building stock, including legally designated "heritage" structures, has three major benefits for the environment: saving of embodied energy and resources consumed in the past; the avoidance of further resource demands on currently more fragile ecosystems; and reduction in waste. For simplicity, all three may be subsumed under the last. Waste may be seen as the non-sustainable use of environmental resources. It is driven by the throw away mentality that remains prevalent in contemporary society and supported by several public policies.

One issue of concern to both environmentalists and preservationists is the large percentage of materials from demolished buildings in the solid waste stream destined for landfill sites. A contributory cause of this problem is *The Income Tax Act*, specifically its provisions for declaring a capital loss on demolished buildings. This discriminates against environmentally responsible retention and reuse of existing structures. Waste disposal fees do not level the playing field. A case may well be made that the real cost of disposing of building materials following demolition exceeds the potential redevelopment benefits on a cleared site.

The call for tax reform and changes concerning other problematic public policies would be strengthened immeasurably by an alliance of preservationists and environmentalists. Especially important are the combination of their respective areas of expertise and the size of the constituency for whom they jointly speak.

URBAN REGENERATION

Urban regeneration is a broad notion and means different things to many different participating groups. It also presents contributors with very different opportunities. There is particularly fertile ground here for collaboration between preservationists and environmentalists.

A working definition of urban regeneration might be, a process concerned with the economic, environmental, social and cultural revitalization of down-at-heels districts in older downtowns and aging suburbs. Regeneration then would seek to establish and maintain a stable balance amongst diverse elements with complex interconnections, and to ensure that the resultant community is adaptable to change. Put simply, those active in regeneration could view the city as ecosystem. For many years, the Foundation has argued for the recognition and sound stewardship of our urban ecology.

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spaces; waterfront revival; establishing greenways; and curbing urban sprawl. Collaborative initiatives to address these concerns could involve such things as: exchanging and disseminating information; co-sponsoring forums for debate; building coalitions to lobby governments on public policy; and undertaking joint community demonstration projects.

LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

In the countryside, natural, scenic, archaeological and built heritage resources are under constant threat from urban sprawl, resource industries, road construction, new pipelines and power transmission lines, and landfill sites. Ecosystem and rural landscape integrity is on the line all over Canada. Recent government deregulation and the downloading of responsibility concerning environmental protection, land-use planning and environmental impact assessment constitute a serious setback for environmentalists and preservationists.

The need for coordinated action is urgent. Heritage preservation and the environmental movement can find strength in their respective experience dealing with statutory provisions concerning the environment. Often they have encountered each other in the course of hands-on work in the field and in testifying at statutory public hearings, invariably on the same side.

Collaborative initiatives in this area could focus on mobilizing and joining forces in encouraging governments to maintain, or provide positive alternatives to, existing environmental law and policy. Such action would be facilitated by information exchange regarding current research and policy analysis.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education, particularly in the schools, is arguably the most essential strategy for advancing the twin concerns for quality of life and ecosystem health. The environmental movement has led the way in this field but preservationists have not been without their own achievements. The Heritage Canada Foundation and others have made annual Heritage Day celebrations the springboard for a wide variety of youth education initiatives.

With the advent of such developments as an ecological approach to planning and the field of environmental history, human heritage and culture are increasingly becoming part of the concept and practice of environmental education. Europeans have long since included the built environment whereas this is a relatively recent practice in North America. The time is ripe for Canadian environmentalists and preservationists to join forces on all fronts.

Collaborative initiatives could include such things as exchanging information, sharing a database, accepting articles for each other's publications, advocacy work with departments of education on curriculum matters, co-sponsoring and contributing to conferences, and pilot projects with children either in a school setting or with other leaders of youth. Adult as well as youth environmental education initiatives could be incorporated within community demonstration projects in urban regeneration.

CONCLUSION

Those active in the environmental movement and in heritage preservation recognize more and more that they share common ground on vital issues and need to work together to help achieve their goals. But partnerships are not built in a day, even between natural allies. This document will be widely shared with environmental organizations in Canada to invite their comments and seek suggestions for potential collaborative initiatives. And, in keeping with its proactive spirit, the Foundation will pursue exploratory discussions with those parties that have already manifested promise for building partnerships.

Questions, comments and suggestions should be forwarded to:

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