

HCF 2012—Worst Losses List

BMO Building, Edmonton, AB –MODERN GEM LOST TO DEVELOPERS

The Bank of Montreal Building, one of Edmonton’s finest modern heritage office buildings, sat empty for more than a decade. Clad in custom green-glazed brick with vertical pillars of pink and black Morton gneiss from Minnesota (one of the oldest rocks on the planet), it was demolished in March of 2012 to make way for a parkade with a two-storey retail structure. The City voted down an attempt to postpone the pending demolition. In Alberta, provincial legislation requires full market value compensation if a property is listed as heritage without the owner’s consent. In this case, it would have bankrupted the city’s heritage conservation budget.



Brighton Public School, Brighton, ON – SHORT-SIGHTED DECISION BY SCHOOL BOARD WRITES END OF STORY FOR SCHOOL

Despite a commissioned report that concluded the building was solid, and a local developer’s tireless efforts to convince town council of its viability for conversion to seniors condos, council voted against an “intent to designate” that could have allowed more time for the community to consider options. The central area of the school dated to 1915 with the west wing added in 1964. A few pieces of the building were salvaged for possible use in a memorial, but the bulk went to landfill. Demolition took place March 2012. The historic school was lost due to an intractable regional school board and a lack of political will.



Mount Allison Memorial Library, Sackville, NB – CAMPUS LANDMARK DEMOLISHED

Opened in 1927, this Tudor-style library and was dedicated to those who lost their lives in World War One. The red sandstone building, known as “the most beautiful building on campus,” served as a library until the 1970s, becoming part of the student centre, a campus hub, housing the student union and radio station. The library was demolished in December 2011 to be replaced by a \$30 million arts facility. The cost to save the building was estimated at \$5 million.



Winnipeg International Airport, Winnipeg, MB – LACK OF IMAGINATION SET AIRPORT ON CRASH COURSE

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. The airport was deemed out-of-date and will soon be replaced by a larger facility to accommodate the rise in air travel. Plans had been in the works to use the old terminal as the home of the Western Canada Aviation Museum, but the proposal was dropped. Despite a groundswell of protest at the local and national levels, the airport was demolished in June 2012, a victim of inadequate protective legislation at the federal level.



Photo: Christian Cassidy

Heritage Buildings, Goderich, ON – SERIOUSLY FLAWED DISASTER RESPONSE CAUSES MORE DAMAGE THAN INITIAL TORNADO

The damage wrought by the powerful tornado that hit “the prettiest town in Canada” August 21, 2011 was compounded by provincial and local officials who barred owners and insurance companies from tarping damaged, yet salvageable buildings due to the presence of asbestos. The heavy rains in the days following the tornado led to irreversible mould and water damage in roofless structures. Fourteen designated or heritage district buildings were ultimately demolished as a result, especially disfiguring Goderich’s famous octagonal Courthouse Square. Heritage experts are now calling for the Ontario’s Heritage Act to be given the same weight as the Health and Safety Act in disaster response protocols.



Photo: Goldsmith Borgal & Company Ltd.