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Patron
Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean
C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D.
Governor General of Canada

Présidente d'honneur
Son Excellence la très honorable Michaëlle Jean
C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D.
Gouverneure Générale du Canada

January 29, 2010

Mayor Mike Hancock
City of Brantford
100 Wellington Square
P.O. Box 818,
Brantford, ON
N3T 5R7

Dear Mayor Hancock,

Re: Demolition Plan for South Side of Colborne St. and North Side of Water St.

As the national voice for the conservation of built heritage in Canada, the Heritage Canada Foundation (HCF) is writing to object to the City of Brantford's plan to demolish 41 buildings on the City's Heritage Inventory on Colborne and Water Streets (Request for Tenders Notice 10-01).

We strongly urge you to halt your demolition plans and to conduct thorough structural assessments of all 41 buildings on Colborne Street to determine their potential for redevelopment. We also urge you to conduct a comprehensive heritage assessment -- building on the heritage study and inventory completed in 1992 -- to afford a clear sense of the significance of the 41 buildings, individually and as an historic streetscape. And finally, we encourage you to consult expertise in heritage-centred revitalization strategies to learn how you can capitalize on these valuable community assets.

The buildings the City now owns on Colborne Street hold great potential to reinforce downtown Brantford's emerging role as a post-secondary hub. There are a number of historic property conversion projects in other parts of Canada which have acted as catalysts for downtown renewal: for instance, Red River College's Princess Street Campus in Winnipeg, CentreBeam Place in Saint John, and the Meduse complex in Quebec City.

Brantford has been blessed with an extraordinary legacy of heritage buildings, especially in its downtown core, including 27 heritage buildings and sites on the Canadian Register of Historic Places. In 2005, the City was awarded a Heritage Communication award from the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals for its web-based presentation of the Brantford Heritage Inventory. A project described in the award citation as "the largest

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and most ambitious documentation of built heritage in a medium-size municipality in Ontario or even Canada.” The City’s role in facilitating the adaptive use of over a dozen vacant downtown buildings by Wilfrid Laurier University and other post-secondary institutions is an exemplary model for other Canadian communities grappling with the challenges of downtown revitalization.

HCF recognizes the struggle the City of Brantford has had over the past several years in attempting to enforce maintenance on the 41 Colborne Street properties, which culminated in their expropriation in 2009. Given these efforts, it came as a shock to learn that the City intended to demolish all of these structures, on very short timelines, with no definitive plan for what will be built in their place. In the 1960s and early 1970s, mass demolition of older buildings was an “urban renewal” strategy employed in inner cities across Canada. Urban planning experts and community leaders now agree, however, that this was a severely flawed strategy, one that did little to regenerate neighbourhoods.

Ownership of the 41 buildings on Colborne Street gives the City of Brantford a remarkable opportunity to set a course for its future that continues to build on its impressive architectural inheritance. In this way you can demonstrate that growth, sustainable development and heritage conservation are compatible and mutually supportive. Once these buildings are demolished, this opportunity is gone forever.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Bull
Executive Director

cc. Mr. Phil McColeman, Member of Parliament, Brant
Mr. John Bradford, Councillor, City of Brantford
Mr. Vince Bucci, Councillor, City of Brantford
Ms. Marguerite Ceschi-Smith, Councillor, City of Brantford
Mr. James Calnan, Councillor, City of Brantford
Mr. Richard Carpenter, Councillor, City of Brantford
Ms. Jennifer Kinneman, Councillor, City of Brantford
Mr. Mark Littell, Councillor, City of Brantford
Mr. Dan McCreary, Councillor, City of Brantford
Mr. Greg Martin, Councillor, City of Brantford
Mr. John Sless, Councillor, City of Brantford
Ms. Helen Borowicz, Planner, Planning Department, City of Brantford
Mr. Jack Jackowetz, Chair, Brantford Heritage Committee