



# Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba

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## Media Release

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### Heritage Canada Foundation Releases 2009 Top Ten Endangered Places and Worst Losses Lists – Display Building No. II 6<sup>th</sup> on the List

OTTAWA, ON-July 7, 2009 - The Heritage Canada Foundation (HCF) has released its **Top Ten Endangered Places and Worst Losses Lists** drawing attention to a total of 17 architectural and heritage sites in Canada either threatened with demolition or already lost.

The **Top Ten Endangered Places List**, compiled from nominations received as well as from news items that HCF has been following and reporting on throughout the year includes:

- **The David Dunlap Observatory and Park**, Richmond Hill, Ontario, a scientific and cultural landmark associated with Canada's international accomplishments in the field of astronomy—threatened with development
- Vancouver's **Pantages Theatre**—the city's oldest vaudeville house—heading for landfill
- **Bellevue House**, Amherstburg, Ontario, a National Historic Site connected to the War of 1812—a scandalous case of demolition by neglect
- Quebec City's **Franciscan Sisters Missionary Chapel**—the finest example of neo-baroque décor in the province—praying for a miracle
- **Moncton High School**, New Brunswick, magnificent sandstone landmark, victim of province's lack of commitment to existing schools
- **Dominion Exhibition Display Building II**, Brandon, Manitoba—monument to agriculture and National Historic Site—hovering on the brink of collapse
- Quebec's **Grenville Canal**, one of the oldest military canals in Canada, desperately seeking funding
- **St. Mary's Community School**, Saskatoon—the oldest Catholic school in the city—destined for landfill in order to create a “green” space
- **Crowsnest Pass Mining Complexes and Coleman's Historic Downtown**, Alberta, home to designated historic mining sites suffering from neglect, vandalism and development pressures
- **Heritage Conservation Districts in Ontario**—landmark Ontario Municipal Board decision threatens integrity of provinces more than 90 designated heritage districts

### **Dominion Exhibition Display Building II, 13th Street, Brandon, Manitoba — NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE SORELY NEGLECTED**

**Lack of funding support from the provincial and federal governments—who have both designated this monument to Canada's agricultural heritage—has left Brandon's Display Building II hovering on the brink of collapse.**

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*The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba is a non-profit charitable organization with the purpose of showcasing agriculture and linking urban and rural through education and awareness while providing entertainment, community pride and economic enhancement of the region.*

### **Why it matters**

Many generations of families have celebrated agriculture and manufacturing under the impressive domed roof of Display Building II. This architectural monument is the last surviving building of those constructed for the Dominion Fair held in Brandon in 1913. Designed in Beaux-Arts Classical style by Walter H. Shillinglaw and David Marshall, two prominent Brandon architects, it also served as a display space for the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba's three annual events: the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, the Manitoba Summer Fair and the Manitoba Livestock Expo.

Already designated a National Historic Site, the province declared the building a Provincial Heritage Site in 1984, recognizing it as "a rare surviving example of agricultural buildings constructed in Manitoba."

### **Why it's endangered**

Display Building Number II is in poor condition and deteriorating rapidly. It is feared that the building may collapse over the next couple of years. There are holes and gaps in the walls, exposing the structure to vandals and risk of fire.

Currently, it's being used as a storage facility for Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba, which is trying to find funding to restore the landmark and adapt it for office space to house five non-profit organizations, as well as an interactive museum for children.

### **Where Things Stand**

There is tremendous community support for the building's rehabilitation. As well as the non-profits wanting to relocate to the site because of its historical connection to agriculture and Brandon, all three neighbouring municipalities have agreed to pass motions supporting the project, as has Brandon's municipal heritage committee.

The Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba was unsuccessful in its application for funding from the Building Canada Program, and general manager Karen Oliver is feeling less confident about the future of the site. "The building may have seen its last hurrah and that is a very sad thought. Time is running out and saving it is now beyond our means," she worries. Oliver sees creating a hub of agriculture and education as a great use of the building and a sound solution to the problem. A substantial financial commitment from a provincial or federal body would give the building a fighting chance to recapture its former glory.

Topping the **Worst Losses List** is the historic **Alma College** in St. Thomas, Ontario tragically lost to fire just hours after the local MPP met with Premier McGuinty's chief of staff about its preservation.

Examples of historic places needlessly destroyed by the wrecking ball are plentiful: Ontario leads the country with the demolition of the heritage-designated **Erie Street United Church** in Ridgeway, and the Muskoka's Modernist **Marygrove Resort** that was torn down in the name of development progress—and the tax assessment revenues that will result.

The iconic **Bens Deli Restaurant** in Montréal was torn down in favour of a 14-storey boutique hotel with, ironically, a restaurant on the ground floor.

Out west, Edmonton lost its oldest apartment block, the elegant **Arlington Apartments**, to bureaucratic wrangling; and in Weyburn, Saskatchewan the massive **Souris Valley Hospital** was consigned to landfill.

In Halifax, Nova Scotia the **Violet Clark Building**, the last wooden “sailortown” structure on Water Street, was demolished—a scapegoat in a larger development dispute.

The Heritage Canada Foundation is a national, membership-based, non-profit organization with a mandate to promote the preservation of Canada's historic buildings and places.

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