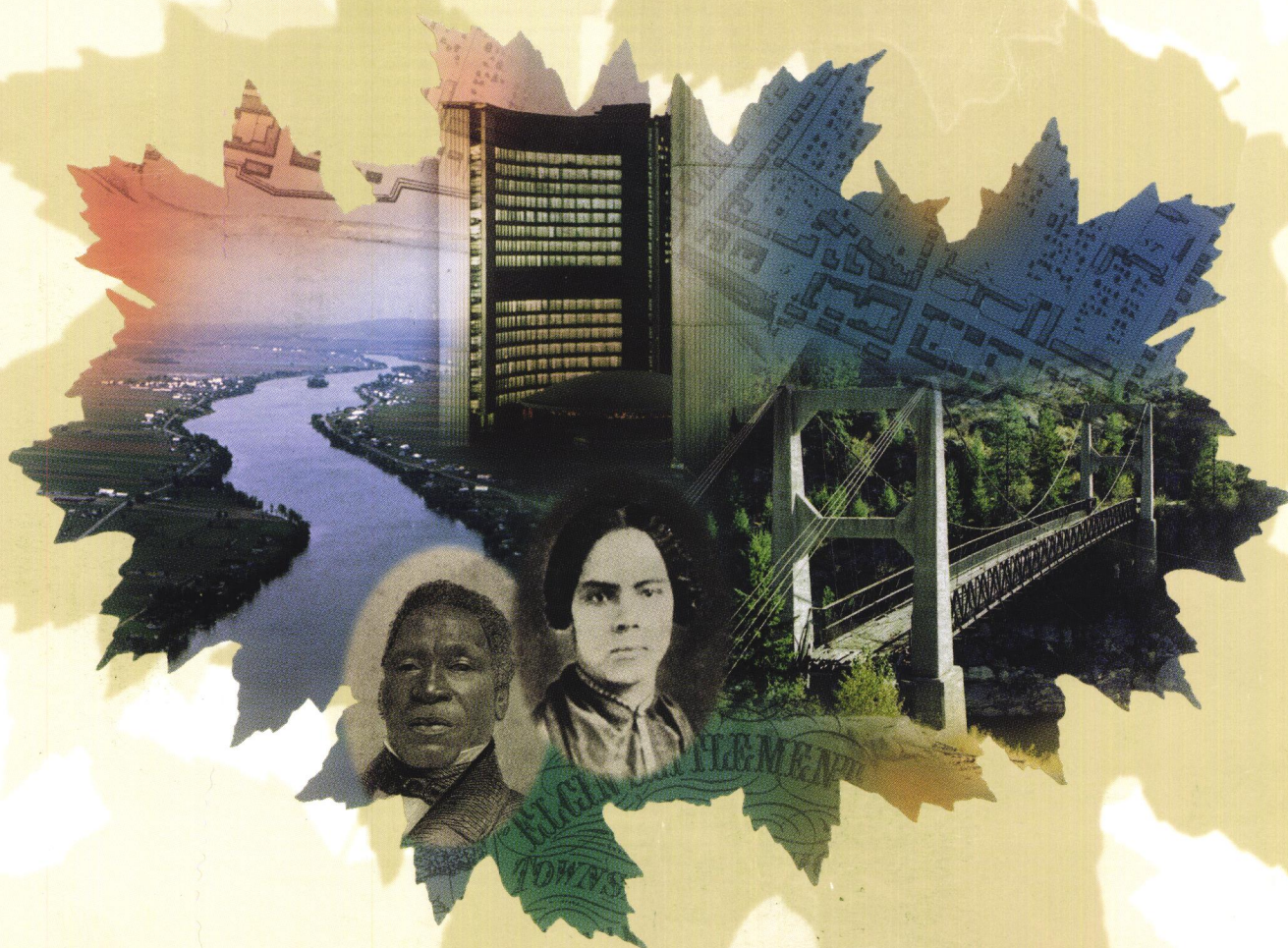
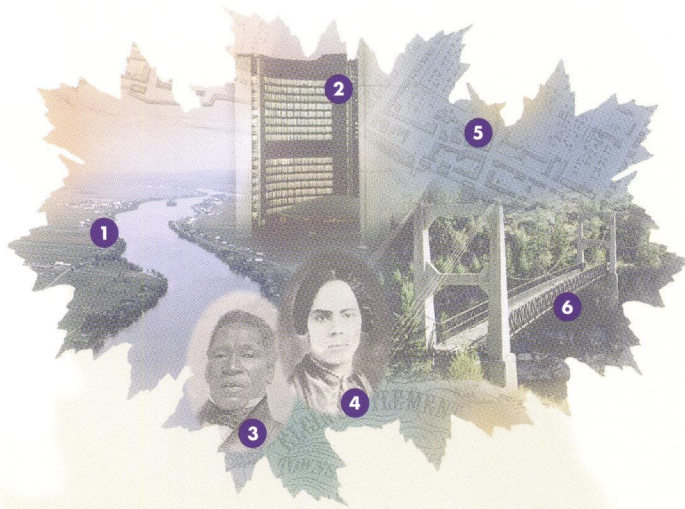


NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES OF CANADA

SYSTEM PLAN

COMMEMORATING CANADA'S BUILT HERITAGE OF THE MODERN ERA





Identification of images on the front cover photo montage:

1. The Richelieu River
2. Toronto City Hall
3. The Reverend Josiah Henson
4. Mary Ann Shadd Cary
5. Plan of Montréal
6. Brilliant Suspension Bridge

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada is the statutory body responsible for advising the Minister of Canadian Heritage and, through the minister, to the Government of Canada on the commemoration of nationally significant aspects of Canada's history.

The Board encourages public support and involvement to enhance Canadians' awareness of the patterns of the past that have shaped our nation. Almost 80 percent of the subjects considered by the board are proposed by the public.

You can help in the effort to expand public awareness of this important theme by submitting buildings and sites of the Modern era for the consideration of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Submissions, along with requests for more information on the national historic sites program, can be sent to the following address:

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FOREWORD

Canadians take great pride in the places, people and events that shape our history and define our country.

These defining moments of Canadian history are our inheritance and the legacy we hold in trust for future generations.

In honouring the milestones of Canadian history, we need to make sure that we recognize the full range of human beings and full range of significant achievements and actions that have shaped our nation.

There are still stories and voices and accomplishments and marvels from Canada's past that are not well enough known by those of us alive today. We need to tell those stories and hear those voices and mark those accomplishments — for our own sake and for the sake of future generations. The truth is that Canada's heritage connects us to our roots, connects us to our future and connects us to each other.

This booklet is one in a new series that introduces chapters of Canada's history that have not received the national recognition which they merit.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and I are determined to recognize with pride the contributions made by all who came before us in shaping our remarkable and cherished country of Canada.



Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian Heritage



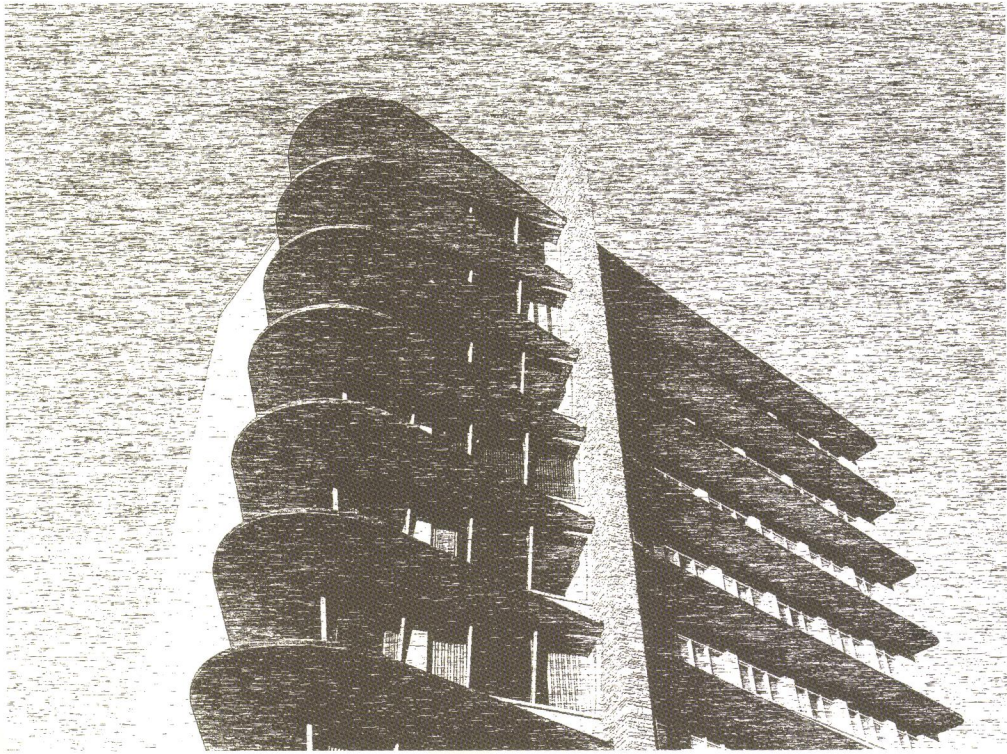


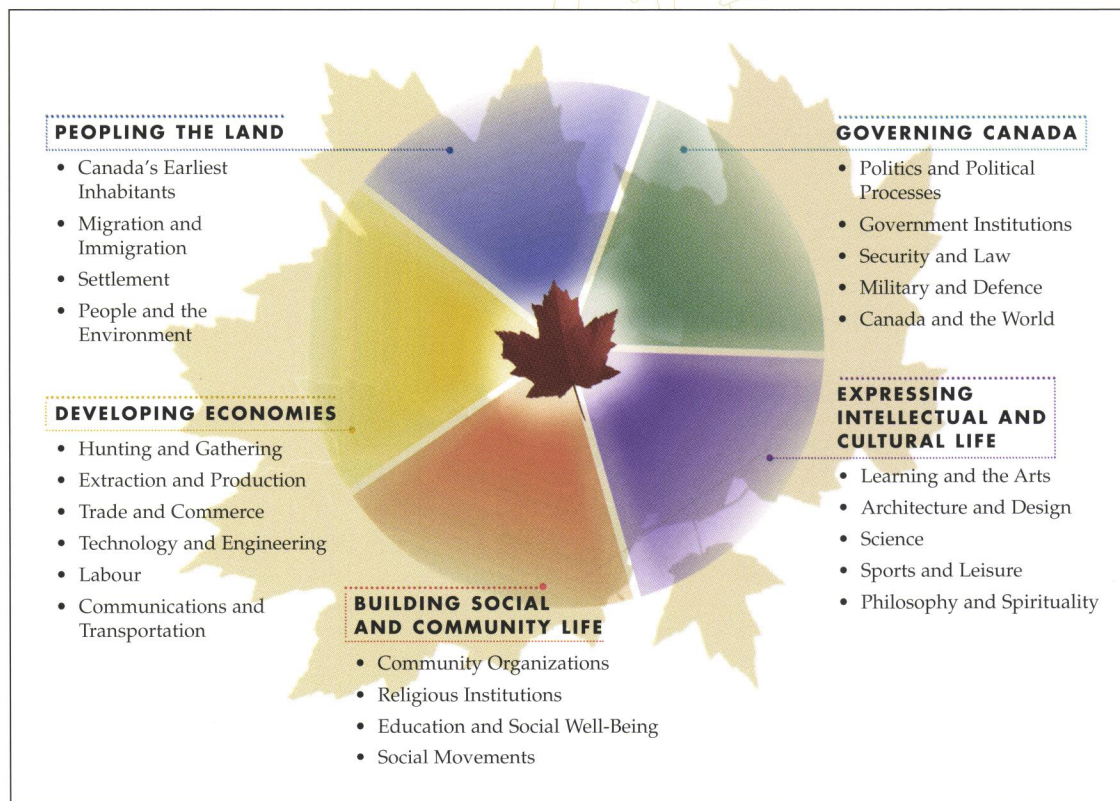


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THE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES SYSTEM PLAN AND THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

The system of National Historic Sites of Canada cannot be considered either finite or complete. The federal government is working with others to create a more representative system — one that truly reflects the rich history and heritage that define Canada. *Built Heritage of the Modern Era* reflects research carried out by Parks Canada on the nation's built environment of the recent past, a subject that is currently regarded as under-represented within the system. The Thematic Framework organizes Canadian history into five broad, inter-related themes, each of which has a number of sub-themes. *Built Heritage of the Modern Era* relates primarily to the theme of Expressing Intellectual and Cultural Life and its sub-theme of Architecture and Design but also cuts across many other thematic categories.





COMMEMORATING CANADA'S BUILT HERITAGE OF THE MODERN ERA

The Alexander Graham Bell
Museum (1953–56)
in Baddeck, N.S.
A Recognized Federal
Heritage Building

In the mid-1990s, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the agency charged with advising the Minister of Canadian Heritage on the commemoration of nationally significant aspects of our history, requested a study on evaluating and commemorating Canada's buildings and sites of the Modern era. As a result, Montréal architect and educator Susan D. Bronson was hired by Parks Canada to prepare a framework study on this under-represented theme in the Canadian family of national historic sites.

Ms. Bronson's report, "Built Heritage of the Modern Era: Overview, Framework for Analysis, and Criteria for Evaluation," was based on research carried out between January and June 1997. For the purposes of the study, "built heritage of the Modern era" was defined as buildings, ensembles and sites constructed between about 1930 and the mid 1970s. Its primary focus was on how national significance could be evaluated, not on recommending specific sites for commemoration. Its aims were threefold:

- 1) to provide an overview of current local, national and international approaches to analysing and evaluating the built heritage of the Modern era;
- 2) to propose an approach to a framework for the analysis of Canadian resources of this period; and
- 3) to propose preliminary criteria for the evaluation of those resources that possess potential national significance.

THE SCOPE AND PERIOD OF STUDY

A wide view of the scope of the heritage in question was adopted in the framework study — thus the title “Built Heritage” rather than “Modern Architecture.” This view takes into account the broadening definition of cultural heritage used in the past decade by those involved in commemoration, in Canada and abroad. Included are buildings, groups of buildings — including urban, suburban and rural districts — and sites, including cultural landscapes, urban squares, cemeteries, parks and gardens.

This view is not restricted to landmarks or works of well-known designers; it also encompasses more modest examples of our built heritage, regional expressions of various cultures in the Canadian mosaic and resources designed by and for previously neglected groups such as First Nations and the working class. The scope also includes resources that represent, either in terms of their form or their function, a regional or cultural response to the developments of the period. Examples include the new planned communities and facilities in the Canadian North, and the post-and-beam “West Coast Style” structures in British Columbia.

The Modern era in Canada may be defined conceptually by a conspicuous and widespread faith in the future, extraordinarily rapid changes to lifestyles and unprecedented growth. These traits had an impact on the way most Canadians lived, and on the places where they lived. Their effect on the built environment began tentatively during the Depression years, intensified following the Second World

War and peaked in the 1950s. In the 1960s, the preoccupations of Canadians gradually began to change when some of the basic premises of the 1940s and 1950s began to be questioned. By the early 1970s Canadians were once again looking to the past for clues to improving their environment and dealing with new domestic and global challenges.

In this study, the Modern era was therefore considered to encompass the years from about 1930 to about 1975; that is, from the period when a faith in a better future *independent* of the past began to take hold and find expression in a significant number of buildings, to the period when Canadians’ faith in a better future untethered to the past began to fade, replaced by the *rooted* architecture of the heritage conservation and post-Modernist movements. It was accepted that this era began and ended with several years of transition — and that it is somewhat misleading to define an era in terms of precise dates.

A THREATENED HERITAGE

The framework study emphasized that Canadian buildings, ensembles and sites of the Modern era are no less threatened than the built heritage of earlier eras. Indeed, for several reasons, many of them are more vulnerable than their predecessors: there is still generally less appreciation of the significance of the built heritage of this period; the materials and methods of construction were often less durable, and in some cases experimental or not designed for longevity; the aging process, particularly in instances where maintenance has been poor, is sometimes less graceful than for earlier heritage; and the conservation challenges are often technically more difficult. This ongoing threat, which has already led to the loss or degradation of a number of significant structures and landscapes from this period, suggests that systematic efforts to protect selected resources of the Modern era need to be made.

The study confirmed that there is a great deal of interest on the part of professionals and scholars in the built heritage of the Modern era in Canada. At the same time, those involved in this field agree that many property owners, decision-makers and members of the general public remain sceptical about the relevance of its protection. Others stress the urgency of dealing with it as soon as possible, as these resources are threatened with demolition and neglect, and it will soon be too late.

Despite these mixed views, a wide range of efforts to research, inventory, commemorate and protect the built heritage of the recent past has been initiated by municipalities, provinces, interest groups and scholars across the country. These vary in approach, from treating this heritage in the same manner as the earlier vintage to designing special inventory and research programs to take into account the factors that distinguish it from its forerunners. In

addition, the last few years have witnessed a number of creative initiatives to increase awareness of the importance of identifying, documenting and researching the buildings, ensembles and sites that speak to the cultural and technological preoccupations of this period. Such undertakings present tremendous potential for collaboration between different levels of government, academic institutions and interest groups.

Living room of the D.C. Simpson house II (1953), West Vancouver, B.C., from *The New Spirit: Modern Architecture in Vancouver, 1938-1963* Presented at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, 1997



A SURVEY OF CURRENT APPROACHES TO INVENTORY AND COMMEMORATION

A major component of the study was a cross-country survey to determine how the inventory and commemoration of recent heritage is being handled by planning departments, advisory boards, heritage authorities and interest groups. Almost 100 persons were contacted. The objectives of this survey were:

- 1) to establish contact with resource people involved in the commemoration of the built heritage of the Modern era across the country; and
- 2) to get an idea of the level of interest in the built heritage of the recent past in different parts of the country, and of how the research, inventory, commemoration and protection of the built heritage of this era are being addressed by various groups.

The survey addressed six broad issues: interest in the project; relevance of the subject; inventories planned or undertaken; activities aimed at commemoration or protection; research; and public awareness initiatives.

Interest

It is clear from the survey that interest in the project is high. It was generally agreed by respondents that there is a clear need for sharing information on this topic, and a large number of people expressed appreciation to Parks Canada for taking the initiative to carry out this preliminary survey and make its findings available.

Relevance

With few exceptions, the resource persons contacted agreed that the subject was relevant: the built heritage of the recent past is worthy of attention as far as research, inventory, commemoration, protection and public awareness are concerned, despite its popular reputation as too ugly, too socially irresponsible or too recent to be considered "heritage." In addition, most municipal and provincial government representatives noted that they are still focusing their limited human and financial resources on the inventory and protection of earlier heritage; recent heritage is often considered of



The Winnipeg Clinic (1959), researched and photographed by the Winnipeg Architecture Foundation

secondary importance to earlier heritage. There was almost unanimous agreement that ongoing cutbacks and downsizing are preventing any new initiatives that imply special funding — such as the preparation of an inventory of recent heritage — from moving forward. Some cities and provinces are working with heritage legislation that was developed in the 1970s or early 1980s, and acknowledge that it is time to re-evaluate their policies given the broadening definition of heritage.

Nevertheless, some have managed to make the recent past a priority: the non-profit Winnipeg Architecture Foundation, for example, has received funding to research and photograph the city's built heritage from the 1940-1975 period; the District of North Vancouver has completed such an inventory; and the City of Toronto-North District (North York) has already published its survey, *North York's Modernist Architecture*.

Inventory

Despite an overall focus in Canada on pre-Modern-era heritage, a number of inventories of recent heritage have been undertaken in different parts of the country. At the provincial level, for example, Nova Scotia has made a preliminary selection of some 20 buildings in the Halifax area as a starting point for developing the criteria for designation, and Saskatchewan is documenting recent heritage on an ad hoc basis as the opportunity arises. At the municipal

level, cities such as Montréal and Québec City have inventories that include both the heritage of the recent past and earlier heritage; there are no cutoff dates, and buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of all eras are covered. Others have initiated special municipal inventories of their recent heritage, including a number of the communities in the urban regions of Toronto and Vancouver.

The three Canadian working parties of DOCOMOMO, an international, non-governmental organization devoted to the documentation and conservation of the modern movement, have been very active in this field: DOCOMOMO Québec began an inventory of representative recent heritage in that province in 1992; DOCOMOMO Ontario carried out an inventory of about 20 of what it felt to be Ontario's most important Modern buildings; and DOCOMOMO.BC has completed the documentation of 14 sites in British Columbia. The most outstanding of these were included in a DOCOMOMO International publication prepared in connection with its conference in Brasilia in 2000. Some universities have also tackled inventories: students taking the course "Modern Architecture in Canada" at the University of Waterloo, for example, inventoried buildings in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, and University of Victoria faculty and students working with the local chapter of the Architectural Institute of British Columbia have initiated an inventory of post-war Victoria architecture.

Commemoration and protection

The framework study concluded that our Modern built heritage is sadly under-represented in terms of commemoration and protection. Only three percent of our National Historic Sites of Canada and less than a quarter of our designated Federal Heritage Buildings post-date 1930. Few provinces have designated buildings, ensembles or sites of the Modern era. Most provincial representatives report that their efforts are focused on earlier heritage because so much work remains to be completed and funding is limited. British Columbia and Quebec, among other provinces, noted that municipalities are being encouraged to assume additional responsibility for heritage designations because it was thought that protection could be better ensured at the local level through zoning regulations, permit review and other municipal mechanisms. At the same time, DOCOMOMO Québec has lobbied the province for a heritage policy that supports Modern architecture's contributions to contemporary culture.

Most municipalities distinguish between *listing* on their inventory, which implies documentation but typically not protection, and *designation*, which involves protection and in some cases financial incentives. For example, fifty buildings from 1945 and later

are included among the properties listed on the City of Toronto (now Toronto–South District) inventory; of these, twelve have been designated. Twenty of the 100 buildings identified in Vancouver's Recent Landmarks Program have been added to the city's Heritage Register listing; three of these have been designated. To date, designations of the recent past are largely restricted to buildings, as opposed to sites or neighbourhoods. Some recent heritage in certain cities is protected because it is located within a municipally designated conservation district. Such is the case in Montréal and Saint John, New Brunswick; in Toronto's Wychwood Park Heritage Conservation District, about 15 percent of the 57 properties date from 1945 and later.

Research

In addition to the research carried out as part of the inventories mentioned above, a significant number of scholars are active in this field, notably at the University of Victoria, the University of British Columbia, the University of Calgary, the University of Manitoba, the University of Waterloo, the University of Toronto, Carleton University, the Université du Québec à Montréal, McGill University, Université Laval and DalTech. The School of Design at the Université du Québec à Montréal has created the first graduate-level programme in North America devoted specifically to

understanding and protecting Modern architecture. A number of independent researchers are also carrying out research on 20th-century architecture and modernism in Canada, and the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montréal has created a fellowship to support research in this subject.

Public awareness.

It was generally agreed by respondents that any efforts aimed at the inventory, commemoration and protection of the heritage of the recent past should involve education: municipal councils, property owners and the general public have to be convinced of the relevance of the work of

this period. At the civic level, a pamphlet on Vancouver's Modern heritage prepared a few years ago has proved to be a useful tool for informing owners of the importance of their buildings and for negotiating interventions. The former City of North York published its inventory for the same reason, as has the District of West Vancouver, which also integrated projects involving recent heritage into its heritage awards program, thereby stimulating both public and professional interest in the subject.

Interest groups and cultural institutions have played an instrumental role in increasing public awareness about this period in their communities' architectural history. DOCOMOMO has organized



The Alexander Graham Bell Museum (1953–56) in Baddeck, N.S. A Recognized Federal Heritage Building

tours, technical workshops, public lectures and conferences, and has produced newsletters in both printed and electronic formats to sensitize people to the merits of the Modern movement. Exhibitions on the Modern built heritage of Vancouver, Calgary and Kitchener-Waterloo have been successfully staged by local and national institutions; the Canadian Centre for Architecture in particular has been stimulating research on 20th-century architecture and planning by hosting exhibits on this period.

A number of new publications on the buildings and sites of the Modern era have become available during the last decade, and professional and scholarly journals such as *ARQ: La revue d'architecture*, the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada*, the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* and the *Association for Preservation Technology Bulletin* have featured articles on the

subject. Electronic media also present excellent potential for increasing public awareness of the built heritage of the Modern era. Victoria's Modern architecture, for example, has its own web site at <http://www.maltwood.uvic.ca/Architecture/ma/>

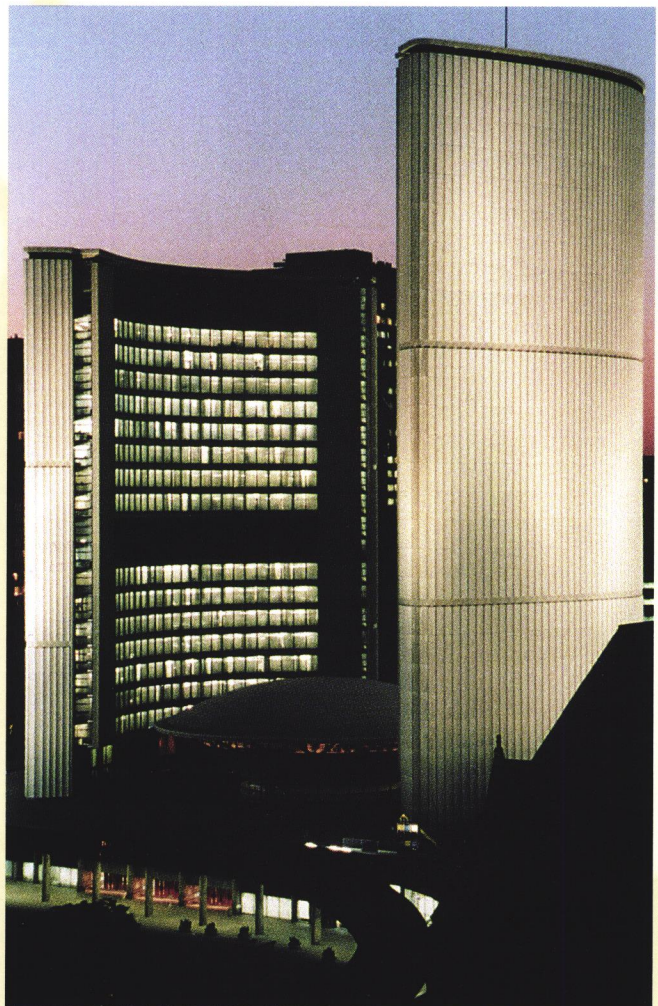
In light of the interest shown by the current generation of architectural practitioners and students in the Modern era, there is tremendous potential to involve both professionals and aspiring architects in some of these awareness initiatives. In addition, since a number of the architects and builders who were active during the Modern era are still living, the time is opportune to talk to them and thus gain insight into their careers, education and thinking that is not necessarily evident in the journals of the period and the works themselves. The District of North Vancouver, the former City of North York and the Canadian Centre for Architecture are all exploring the potential of such "oral history" projects.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

The study recommended that a framework for analysis should provide efficient and effective analysis and evaluation of the resources from this period; create a broader understanding of the scope of the heritage of this era and how its production was influenced by cultural phenomena in Canadian history; build on existing and ongoing research, inventory and public awareness efforts (and provide opportunities for continued collaboration between those involved); prepare material that could be used to raise awareness and encourage citizen input into the commemoration process; and be shared with other countries and thus contribute to the understanding of the cultural heritage of this era throughout the world — and perhaps eventually to identify Canadian resources for nomination to the World Heritage List.

The study argued that the most appropriate, realistic and manageable way to organize a framework that covers the full scope of Canada's built heritage of the Modern era was according to broad categories of use. Ten categories were proposed: education; religion; commerce and industry; government and public activities; culture, recreation and leisure; transportation and communication; housing; health care; military activities; and mixed-use districts and complexes. "Single-family housing," a prototype for these analytical frameworks, has since been developed to place the trend-setting Binning House in West Vancouver (built 1941) into context.

Toronto City Hall (1957-65), a municipally designated heritage property





The B.C. Binning House (1941)
in West Vancouver, B.C.
Designated a National Historic Site
of Canada in 1997



THE EVALUATION OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The identification of significant resources of the Modern era depends on a clear understanding of the cultural phenomena that this heritage expresses. The study therefore proposed that evaluation of the national significance of our Modern built heritage be based on the resource's ability to illustrate three cultural phenomena that generally characterized this era: (a) changing social, economic and political conditions; (b) rapid technological advances; and (c) new ways of expressing form and responding to functional demands.

The identification of significant resources of the Modern era also depends on the resource's integrity, or "authenticity," insofar as this factor affects national significance. The application of authenticity as a criterion for evaluating the built heritage of the Modern era, which is at least as subject to change as earlier heritage, is the topic of ongoing discussion in the heritage field. Many buildings and sites of this period have long outlived their original *raison d'être* and have been altered to accommodate new uses. In addition, many materials and construction methods — and in some cases entire buildings or sites — were designed for regular replacement after a limited lifespan. The framework study therefore recommended that the assessment of the integrity of a building, ensemble or site of the Modern era be based on a clear understanding of both the original intentions of those responsible for its design, and the conditions that have affected its evolution through time, based on a realistic approach to its ongoing use and its relationship with its environment.

The Aldred Building (1929–31),
part of the provincially
designated Old Montréal
historic district



CONCLUSION AND CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

Parks Canada's study "Built Heritage of the Modern Era: Overview, Framework for Analysis, and Criteria for Evaluation" confirmed many suspicions concerning the commemoration of buildings, groups of buildings and sites of the recent past, notably that interest in the Modern era is growing. The study also revealed some unanticipated findings, including that the built heritage of the recent past is receiving more than expected attention as far as research, inventory, commemoration, protection and public awareness are concerned. It also confirmed that, in terms of commemoration and protection, the Modern era is significantly under-represented in Canada.

The study, it should be remembered, focused on the notion of national significance, not on identifying specific buildings or sites for commemoration. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada reviewed the report in November 1997, and made four recommendations:

- 1) It indicated its support for addressing Modern architecture along the lines suggested, including the scope and time period proposed in the study.
- 2) It recommended that the program establish frameworks for the comparative analysis of the built heritage of the Modern era based on ten broad categories of use: education; religion; commerce and industry; government and public activities; culture, recreation and leisure; transportation and communication; housing; health care; military activities; and mixed-use districts and complexes.

- 3) It agreed to accept the preliminary criteria/guidelines that had been proposed to evaluate resources of the period having the potential of national significance:

A building, ensemble or site that was created during the modern era may be considered of national significance if it is in a condition that respects the integrity of its original design, materials, workmanship, function and/or setting, insofar as each of these was an important part of its overall intentions and its present character; and

- A) it is an outstanding illustration of at least one of the three following cultural phenomena and at least a representative if less than an outstanding illustration of the other two cultural phenomena of its time:
 - (a) changing social, political and/or economic conditions;
 - (b) rapid technological advances;

- (c) new expressions of form and/or responses to functional demands; or,
- B) it represents a precedent that had a significant impact on subsequent buildings, ensembles or sites.

Under normal circumstances, the Board will not consider a building, ensemble or site that meets the above criteria/guidelines unless five years have passed since the death of those responsible for its design.

- 4) And finally, the Board agreed that continued collaboration with others involved with the theme was necessary to successfully advance a program of national commemoration of the built heritage of the Modern era. In order to encourage such collaboration and to heighten awareness of the built heritage of the Modern era initiative, the Board requested that the study be précised, translated and sent to provincial heritage ministries, national heritage organizations and others as appropriate.

PHOTO CREDITS

Page 3 — Parks Canada, J. Steeves,
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