

The North York Historical Society

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Backgrounder

Heritage Protection of 65 Carl Hall Road (Parc Downsview Park)

The Toronto Preservation Board at its November 24, 2011 meeting unanimously voted for Board Chair Bob Saunders to contact the Mayor to express the deep concern of the Board about the potential loss of the structure at 65 Carl Hall Road, and to request the Mayor to publicly express his concern and opposition to the Federal government about the proposed demolition of this building, the site of the Canadian Air and Space Museum, formerly known as Canadian Forces Base Downsview Plant No.1.

The Board suggested that the Mayor write to Prime Minister Harper, the Minister responsible for Parc Downsview Park, and federal MPs representing Toronto ridings expressing concern regarding the erasing of heritage protection on federal properties upon transfer to the Parc Downsview Park Corporation, and requesting the federal government to re-designate the property and to respect the City of Toronto's interest in ensuring its heritage protection.

The Board felt that a public expression by the Mayor of the City's wish to preserve the building would underscore the community value of the building and highlight the legislative/policy limbo in which this property and other federal properties in the Downsview complex find themselves.

Background

1. Heritage Value of the Building

The property at 65 Carl Hall Road (Downsview Plant No. 1) is associated both with the former air force base and with the building of aircraft during the Second World War. The building was constructed in five different stages between 1929 and 1944. The first section of Plant #1 was one of several buildings on the site designed by noted architects [Mathers & Haldenby](#), whose other contributions to Toronto include dormitories for Upper Canada College, several buildings for the University of Toronto, the U.S. Consulate, and numerous other buildings of industrial, commercial and residential design.

In the late 1930s, a section was added for the assembly of de Havilland Tiger Moths series of aircraft, and most notably the Mosquito; the increased contract for Tiger

Moths led to a second addition in 1940. The two substantial additions came later in the war, demonstrative not only of the rapid expansion of the site, but of the rapid growth of the Canadian airplane manufacturing industry. The prototype of the Chipmunk was developed in Plant #1 and was first flown at Downsview in 1946; Plant #1 was where the first Beaver was assembled. Plant #1 was used in the 1950s and 1960s by de Havilland's Guided Missile Division and later for the development of Canada's first spacecraft, [the Alouette I](#). Plant #1 was used for manufacturing as late as the mid-1990s, when Bombardier Aerospace (who by this time had acquired de Havilland Canada) used it to construct fuselages for aircraft ordered by the U.S. Army.

Plant #1 is especially rare in that it spans a long period in Canada's aviation history, from the pioneering days of the late 1920s, through World War II into the era of post-war aircraft production. The Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (HBRO) report says that Plant #1 represents "the early development of the aircraft industry in Canada, this country's contribution to the Allied war effort, and the impact of war on the Canadian economy"¹

2. Federal Heritage Status

This property is not protected by federal heritage legislation. The building was designated a Recognized Federal Heritage Building in 1992 by the Department of National Defence. When it passed into the hands of the Canada Lands Corporation in 1996 that designation evaporated. While federal departments are bound by Treasury Board policy (Section 2 on heritage to be precise), crown agencies are not. The transfer to Parc Downsview Park in 2006 had no real impact as the hangar had already lost what little protection it had. We understand that the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBR) designation does not have binding legal impact, However, when it was transferred to the Parc Downsview Park even this was removed.

3. Municipal Heritage Status.

The property is listed in the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties (the address was recently corrected as 65 Carl Hall Road)².

The City of North York had a report prepared in 1998 recommending listing. The Heritage Building Conservation Study Review of the property undertaken by ERA Architects as part of the Downsview Area Secondary Plan (2010) recommended that "due to its cultural heritage ...the complex (should be) maintained and rehabilitated". Parc Downsview Park supported the heritage recommendations contained in the Downsview Area Secondary Plan when the Plan was adopted by City Council in June 2011.

¹ The Story of Plant #1 at Downsview - <http://www.heritagetoronto.org/news/story/2011/11/10/story-plant-1-downsview>

² <http://app.toronto.ca/HeritagePreservation/details.do?folderRsn=2431947&propertyRsn=709523>