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Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia
1588 Barrington Street
PO Box 36111, RPO Spring Garden, Halifax, B3J 3S9

January 16, 2013

Chair and Members of the
Heritage Advisory Committee
Halifax Regional Municipality

Dear Committee Members:

The Heritage Trust understands that an application to substantially alter five registered heritage properties in the block bounded by George, Granville, Duke and Hollis Streets in Halifax will come before the committee next week.

The Trust asks the Committee to recommend that Regional Council reject the application because it does not comply with the Heritage Building Conservation Standards. The proposal would destroy historic materials, features and craftsmanship. The scale and height of the towers would not be compatible with the heritage buildings. We attach some notes on the buildings, a test of the application against the Standards, a test against the Heritage Design Guidelines, and an appendix listing character defining elements of three of the buildings.

We request an opportunity to make a brief oral presentation to the committee when you discuss this application.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Pacey, Chair,
Research Committee

Original Signed

Phil Pacey, Chair,
HRM Committee
902 237 1375, 422 8814

Historical and Architectural Notes

Sheffield House (Champlain Building)

David Henry Starr and John Starr bought this lot in 1859. They constructed a four-storey, brick and granite building, which they called Sheffield House. Here they operated a hardware business and imported iron, steel, and lead, as well as paints and oils, Belgian glass and French zinc, gunpowder, tools and cutlery.

An item that sold well was skates. They imported skates for men and boys, ladies and misses, from England and Germany. John Forbes, a machinist, approached John Starr with an idea. Forbes had invented a skate that would attach to a boot with a single motion of a lever. They established the "Dartmouth Skate Manufactory", with offices in Sheffield House, as well as a factory, managed by John Forbes, on the Preston Road in Dartmouth. The firm was incorporated in 1868 as the Starr Manufacturing Company, with John Starr as president.

Since the factory was destroyed by an arsonist in recent years, the Champlain Building is the most important physical link with this innovative and industrious chapter of Halifax and Dartmouth history. The building should be retained in its entirety. Two facades would not respect the important corporate history that took place inside the building.

Smith Brothers (Hayes Insurance Building)

In the early 1860s, John Wesley Smith and his brother Edmund founded the dry goods firm of Smith Brothers on Granville Street. John Wesley Smith's "rare business aptitude and a persistency of purpose" soon led to great prosperity. Though he was regarded as a "merchant prince", he was not consumed by the world of commerce and finance; he declined bank directorships and served instead on the public school board and on the board of regents of Mount Allison University. His strong Methodist upbringing in Windsor, Nova Scotia, led to his involvement in missionary work in the city's north suburb. His Charles Street mission had "phenomenal success", and eventually J. Wesley Smith laid the cornerstone for a fine new church, the former J. Wesley Smith Memorial Church.

Smith Brothers' firm occupied the stylish Italianate shop, built in 1862, with the truncated pitched roof and the motif of triplets of round-headed windows on the second and third storeys. The firm sold "British and foreign" dry goods, and noted that their stock was "replenished by nearly every mail boat" and was "one of the

most thoroughly assorted in the City". Specialized goods included "kid gloves", along with "Horrockses white shirtings, mantle making and millinery".

The proposed development would retain only the front wall or façade of the building. The historical significance and association with the Smith brothers and the shop where they walked and worked would be lost. The building would be only an odd remnant stuck on a high rise. Such facadism is not considered to be preservation or conservation by any current standards.

McLeod's Grocery (Flinn Building)

Alexander McLeod was a grocer, who owned three buildings on adjacent lots. The first was a three-and-a-half-storey building on Hollis Street, which he called Leith House. In 1862 he built a second building on Granville Street, back-to-back with Leith House. The basement of the Granville Street building had vaults that were used for storage by McLeod, and the upstairs was rented to merchants.

McLeod purchased a third property in 1869. In 1869 or 1870, he built this elegant brick and granite, four-and-a-half-storey building on Hollis Street, just north of Leith House. In Leith House and this building he carried on his grocery business, specializing in beverages. He sold tea both retail and wholesale, but may have made more money with wine, spirits and beer. He imported London Brown Stout, Bass' Bitter Ale, and Guinness Dublin Porter, kept cool in the vaults under the Granville building.

From the arched back windows and dormer of this building, McLeod could keep an eye on his busy properties. From the front dormer, he could watch for ships arriving with more of those special beers. Only by keeping this building intact can we understand its function and its history.

Bank Styles and the Bank of Commerce and the Merchants' Bank

In the early twentieth century, banks were highly distinguishable by their individual architectural styles. This golden era of bank designs was very different from the early nineteenth century, when banks did not announce their presence by their architecture; Halifax's first bank (Collins' Bank) was simply housed in a warehouse with only the word "BANK" incised above the front door. Similarly, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, banks usually occupy buildings which are only distinguishable by their logos on signs. It is important to preserve

the architecturally elegant and individualistic bank buildings from the early twentieth century.

For example, in 1906 the Bank of Commerce Building was constructed in an imposing Greek temple style. Four massive, stone, scroll-capped pillars support a moulded entablature, surmounted by a triangular pediment, heavily grooved with dentils. Customers entered the bank through this portico, which symbolized power and stability.

The proposed development, with a modern overhanging slab above the bank, would completely diminish and detract from the strong character of the historic bank. The slab would visually threaten to crush the bank building underneath.

In 1911, the Montreal architectural firm of Hogle and Davis used a richly decorated classical style for the Merchants' Bank. Ten tall pilasters with ornate Corinthian capitals lead the eye upward past arched windows to the intricate cornice and elegant rooftop balustrade. Customers would have appreciated the palatial ornamentation, which symbolized wealth and status.

Another impressive characteristic feature of the architecturally significant early twentieth-century banks are the magnificent banking halls. Customers were awed by the interior as well as the exterior. True to its era, the Merchants' Bank has an imposing banking hall with decorative pilasters, which echo the exterior design, and a lofty, coffered ceiling.

The proposed development would destroy the beautiful banking hall, and would retain only two exterior walls, reducing them to facades, like incongruous decals applied to the bottom of a high-rise tower.

The Application Would Not Comply with the Heritage Building Conservation Standards.

According to Section 12 of HRM By-law H-200, "Applications for alteration of a registered heritage property **shall** be evaluated in accordance with the Heritage Building Conservation Standards as set forth in Schedule 'B'." The By-law uses the verb "shall", which makes its direction mandatory.

In the present document, we will present the text of five Standards in quotation marks, and then we will evaluate the application in terms of each Standard. We will highlight some words for emphasis.

Standard 1: "The property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires **minimal change** to the defining characteristics of the building, its site and environment."

Residential and office uses are appropriate for these properties, but parking is not. The application says on page 25 of the impact statement, "The site must be excavated to its outermost boundaries in order to accommodate the dimensional requirements for parking spaces and driving aisles". This statement is used to try to justify demolishing three walls and the roofs of the Hayes and Flinn Buildings and two walls and the roofs of the Champlain and Merchants' Bank Buildings. **The application gives priority to parking over heritage.** There is no by-law or policy that requires the proposal to provide parking, but By-law H-200 and Standard 1 mandate a use "that requires minimal change". By attempting to introduce a use, underground parking, that would require drastic change, the application would be in **contravention** of Standard 1.

Standard 2: "The **historic character** of the property shall be **retained and preserved**. The **removal of historic materials** or alteration of features and spaces that characterize the property shall be avoided."

The application would **destroy** much of the **historic character** of the Champlain, Hayes, Flinn and Merchants' Bank Buildings. These properties would be dominated by new high-rise towers. The roofs and side and rear walls of the four buildings and the top two stories of the Champlain Building would be **removed**. Note that both sentences in the Standard use the word "shall", which makes the Standard mandatory. The application would **contravene** Standard 2.

Standard 5: “**Distinctive features**, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of **craftsmanship** that characterize the property shall be **preserved**.”

The two dormers on the Flinn Building, the truncated pitched roofs on the Hayes Insurance and Flinn Buildings, the chimney on the Hayes Building, the segmental arch windows with projecting hoods on the west elevation of the Flinn Building, the windows on the west and south elevations of the Champlain Building are all **distinctive features** of these properties. The brickwork on the west elevations of the Champlain and Flinn Buildings are examples of **craftsmanship**. By proposing to **destroy** these features and this craftsmanship, the application would **contravene** Standard 5.

Standard 9: “New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction **shall not destroy materials that characterize the property**. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be **compatible** with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to **protect the historic integrity** of the property and its environment. (See Note 2)”

As noted under Standard 5 above, the application proposes to **destroy** the two dormers on the Flinn Building, the truncated pitched roofs on the Hayes Insurance and Flinn Buildings, the windows and brickwork on the west elevation of the Flinn Building and the west and south elevations of the Champlain Building. The application would **not protect the historic integrity** or wholeness of these properties but would **rupture the integrity**. The application is in direct **contravention** to this mandatory Standard.

The high-rise towers **would not be compatible** with the massing, size and scale of the heritage buildings. As instructed by Note 2, we will consider this further in a separate discussion of Section 4 of the Design Manual.

Standard 10: “New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that **if removed** in the future, the **essential form and integrity** of the historic property and its environment would be **unimpaired**.”

If the towers were constructed and then were removed in the future, all that would be left of the heritage buildings would be the street facades. The three-dimensional **form** of the buildings (roofs, rear and side walls) would have been **destroyed**. The **integrity** or wholeness of the buildings would be seriously **impaired**. The application would **contravene** this standard.

The Application Would Not Comply with the Heritage Design Guidelines

Note 2 of the Heritage Building Conservation Standards says that Section 4 [the Heritage Design Guidelines] of the "Design Manual of the Downtown Halifax Land Use Bylaw shall be considered in evaluating matters relating to **compatibility** of massing, size, scale and architectural features". The present document will consider the guidelines regarding compatibility and relate them to the application. The discussion will focus on the general guidelines (Section 4.1) and the guidelines for integrated developments and additions (Section 4.4), which are applicable to this case. Some text will be emphasized with bold type.

Section 4.1: "As a principle of both heritage **compatibility** and sustainability, new additions, exterior alterations, or new construction **should not destroy historic materials**, features, or spatial relationships that characterize a property. The new work should be differentiated from the old and should be **compatible** with the historic materials, features, **size, scale, height, proportion and massing** to protect the **integrity** of the property and its environment. ... Style should not be a determinant of **compatibility**, rather material quality, **massing** and urban design considerations are given prominence in this approach."

The first two sentences above are similar to Conservation Standard 9. The application would **destroy historic materials** and the **size, scale, height, proportion and massing** of the towers would be **incompatible** with the heritage buildings. The towers would **overwhelm or dominate** the heritage buildings.

Section 4.1.3: "New work in heritage contexts should not be aggressively **idiosyncratic** but rather it should be neighbourly and **respectful** of its heritage context, while at the same time representing current design philosophy."

The proposed south tower would be **idiosyncratic**, and would **not respect** the Bank of Commerce Building, but would make it appear tiny and insignificant.

Section 4.1.5: "Architectural composition has always had at its root the study of **proportion**. In the design of new buildings in a heritage context, work should take into account the proportions of buildings in the immediate context and consider a design solution with proportional relationships that make a good fit."

The proposed towers would be **out of proportion** to the heritage buildings.

Section 4.4: "In instances where the heritage value of a building includes its three-dimensional character (width, depth and height), **the entire building envelope should be conserved**, and the transition of new construction to, and from, heritage buildings should **respect** all three dimensions."

The heritage value of these buildings is three-dimensional, but the proposed development **would not conserve** the building envelope. The transition from new to old would be abrupt, instead of respectful.

Section 4.4.1(b): "Consideration should only be given to the construction of new buildings abutting, or as an addition to, a heritage resource, when the parts of the heritage building that will be enclosed or hidden from view by the new construction do not contain **significant heritage attributes**."

The truncated pitched roofs of the Hayes and Flinn Buildings and the windows and brickwork on the west facades of the Champlain and Flinn Buildings are **significant heritage attributes**. They would be **destroyed** by the current application.

Section 4.4.2(b): "Stepback building elements that are taller than the podium or streetwall height. Stepbacks should generally be a minimum of 3 metres for flat-roofed streetwall buildings and increase significantly (up to **10 metres**) for landmark buildings, and buildings with unique architectural features such as **peaked roofs** or towers."

The Hayes and Flinn Buildings have truncated **pitched roofs**, but the taller portions of the towers would **not** be stepped back by 10 metres.

Appendix:

Some character defining elements of the Champlain, Hayes and Flinn Buildings

Champlain Building, Duke Street:

This is an intact, three-dimensional building.

Roof, flat, about 60 feet by 55 feet, with an elevator enclosure near the western edge

West elevation: An area about 16 feet wide and three storeys high is visible on the southern portion of this side. The exterior surface is red brick. Every fifth or sixth course of bricks has the headers exposed, instead of the stretchers, in American bond fashion. There are six windows visible, two in the top storey, two in the fifth and two in the fourth. The windows are vertical, with one pane over one pane. The sills are granite. Above each window the bricks are arranged vertically, alternating soldiers and rowlocks, but angled in the form of voussoirs.

South elevation: Part of the top storey of this elevation is visible above the Flinn Building. Corner quoins and the return of the cornice appear at the Hollis Street side of this elevation. The western edge of this elevation is visible from the light well west of the Flinn Building. The construction is similar to that in the west elevation, red bricks, and every fifth course has the headers exposed. There are two windows, with granite sills and bricks arranged vertically as voussoirs, above the windows.

East elevation: The elevation is six storeys high and about 55 feet wide. At the top is a prominent, overhanging, moulded copper-clad cornice. The main material is stucco over brick. The upper five storeys each have eight windows across, two windows at the left, then a space and six windows at the centre and right. The windows are vertical with one pane of glass in upper and lower sashes, and granite sills. The windows on the second storey have granite lintels. Granite corner quoins run up to the top of both edges of the elevation. There is a granite string course above the third storey and another above the first storey. There is a wide signboard between the lower stringcourse and the tops of the wide ground

floor windows. A door is set in the ground floor under the southern stack of windows, and five windows and a door are under the six windows to the north of this elevation. Seven beveled granite pillars separate the ground floor windows and support the brickwork above. Granite panels are set below these five windows. The visible parts of the foundation are granite.

North elevation: The elevation is six storeys high and about 60 feet wide. At the top is a prominent, overhanging, moulded cornice. The main material is stucco over brick, with indentations in the stucco to resemble cut stones. The upper storeys each have nine windows across. The windows are vertical with one pane of glass in upper and lower sashes, and granite sills. The windows on the second storey have granite lintels. Corner quoins run up to the top of both edges of the elevation. There is a granite string course above the third storey and another above the first storey. A wide frieze or signboard is between the lower stringcourse and the tops of the shop windows. Beveled granite pillars, with simple capitals, support the signboard and the five storeys of brickwork above. The two pillars to the west are of double width. The areas below the shop windows and the visible parts of the foundation are also granite.

Hayes Insurance, 1813 Granville Street:

This is a remarkable example of the Italianate style, intact in three dimensions, with a narrow east addition.

Roof: The roof is a truncated pitched roof, 20 feet wide and 50 feet deep. There are skylights on both the east and west faces. There is a brick chimney on the south edge of the east face.

West elevation: The building is three and a half storeys high. The top storey is the truncated pitched roof with skylight, mentioned above. There is a projecting sandstone cornice supported by sandstone brackets. The main material of the second and third storeys is red brick. Sandstone quoins decorate the north and south edges. The quoins at the left edge are wider, indicating that this is the most southerly of the three similar buildings shown in *Rogers' Photographic Advertising Album* of 1871. The third storey has a triplet of three identical arched windows.

These are vertical sash windows with single panes up and down. The upper sashes have segmental arched tops. Above the windows are three projecting moulded sandstone segmental arches. These are supported by carved sandstone capitals, supported in turn by four rectangular sandstone columns. Below the windows is a common projecting sandstone sill, supported by brackets. On the second floor is another group of three windows, this time with the central window taller and wider than the flanking windows. The single-paned upper sashes have segmental arched tops. Above the central window is a projecting segmental-arched sandstone hood, supported by carved sandstone brackets, which rest on the capitals of two rectangular sandstone pillars. The flanking windows have simpler sandstone segmental arched hoods above them, supported by capitals and sandstone pillars. The sill of these windows extends across the elevation as a projecting sandstone stringcourse, which also acts as the cornice for the wooden sign band below. Sandstone carvings of foliage surmount the projecting sandstone blocks at each end of this stringcourse. These blocks are supported by large carved wooden brackets. Wooden pilasters appear to support the outer carved brackets below the sign band and cylindrical pillars support the inner brackets, and divide the storefront into three bays with a recessed central doorway. The shop windows are divided vertically into two panes. The foundation visible below the storefront is granite. The entire elevation is a unique intact example of Victorian Italianate architecture, as shown in *Rogers' Photographic Advertising Album* of 1871.

Flinn Building, 1820 Hollis Street:

This is a fine example of the Italianate style, visible from three sides, and remarkably intact in all three dimensions.

Roof: Truncated pitched, sloping down to Hollis Street and to the west, with gabled dormers on both the east and west slopes of the roof. The roof is about 25 feet wide by 50 feet deep, leaving room for a light well at the west.

West elevation: Gabled dormer on the roof, with two vertical sash windows, with one pane of glass in each sash. The dormer has overhanging eaves and is clad in vertical wood planking on the west face and in shingles on the north and south

faces. The main material on this elevation is red brick. Every fifth course of bricks is set with the headers exposed, in American bond. There are six windows on this elevation, two each on the second, third and fourth floors. Each window has two sashes, one above the other. The sills are granite. The top of each window forms a segmental arch. In this arch, bricks are arranged vertically, but angled in the form of voussoirs. Above this arch of vertical bricks is an arch of horizontal bricks, with the headers exposed and projecting horizontally beyond the face of the wall, to form a projecting arch or hood. Beside each window are four projecting metal rings, two on each side of the window. These rings may have served to hold exterior shutters.

South elevation: The upper part of this is visible, and has been clad in metal.

East elevation: Four and a half storeys high. The top storey has the truncated pitched roof mentioned above. The gabled dormer has a pair of round-headed windows, with vertically operating sashes, and one pane of glass in each sash. There is a projecting moulded granite cornice with brackets beneath. The central three storeys have double pairs of round-headed windows, with single-paned vertical sashes. The dominant material of these storeys is red brick. Granite quoins decorate the left and right corners. There are projecting granite string courses between the third and fourth and between the second and third storeys. These string courses have a course of angled bricks below them. The second-storey windows have granite sills and decorative granite blocks appearing to support the arches. The shop front has an entablature above, with a granite frieze and cornice, and four bays, with a doorway at the left and three window bays. Granite pillars support the two ends of the entablature and brickwork above. The three shop windows each have one large pane below and two smaller panes above, with wooden frames. Separating the shop front bays are three cylindrical wooden columns, with octagonal bases and Corinthian capitals. Below the windows is vertical wooden planking, similar to that on the west dormer. The visible parts of the foundation are granite.

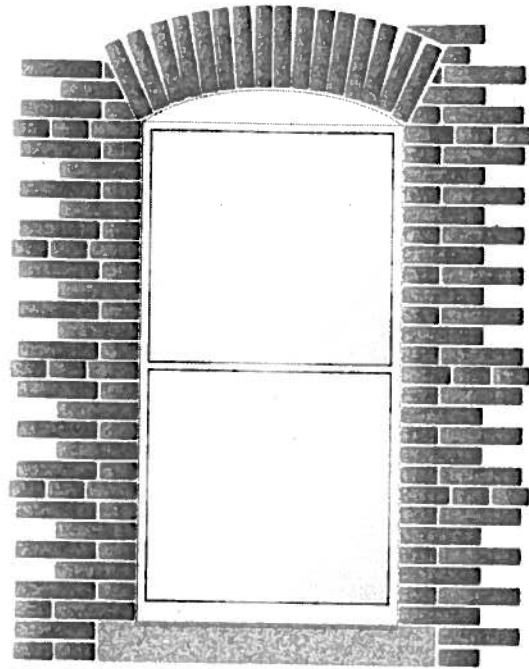
Examples of Historic Architectural Features and Craftsmanship that would be destroyed if the application of Case ~~1976~~ *HCO395* were approved:

Top Right: One of six windows on the west elevation of the Flinn Building, with voussoirs forming a segmental arch at the top and with a granite sill below.

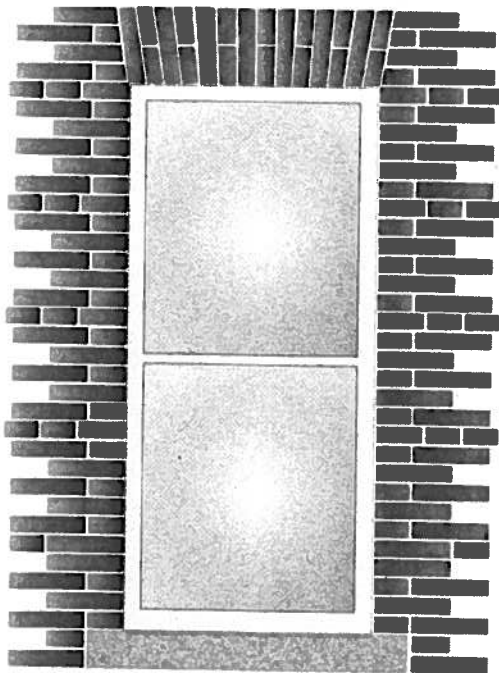
Bottom Left: One of six windows on the west elevation of the Champlain Building, with voussoirs above and a granite sill below.

Bottom Right: Gabled dormer on the west slope of the truncated pitched roof of the Flinn Building.

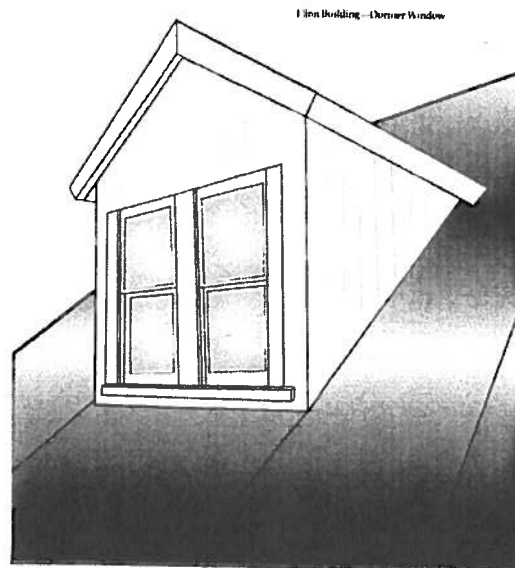
Sketches prepared by Arthur Carter for the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia.



Flinn Building—West Window



Champlain Building—West Window



Flinn Building—Dormer Window