

Heritage BC



ADVOCACY

Heritage BC will be the recognized advocate for heritage in BC and will collaborate with the National Trust for Canada on national issues. A source of information and perspectives on heritage concerns, Heritage BC will advance positive and responsible solutions and representing internationally recognized standards.

from Heritage BC Strategic Directions, 2019-2021 ([link](#))

An Approach to Advocacy

As an advocate for the preservation and conservation of all forms of cultural heritage in British Columbia, we understand advocacy is not a single activity, but that it permeates throughout all of our work. Ongoing education and the provision of timely information is a constructive form of advocacy that is key to our approach.

- In our communications, our advocacy is found in a constant message of supporting and affirming information that educates the field and informs the public.
- In our conferences, our advocacy is found in programs that inspire conversations, urging us to consider new approaches and to explore different solutions, as we respond to external changes and an evolving field.
- On our website and in social media, our advocacy is our research and the information we share, alerting people to threats to heritage, and pointing people toward good practices. We provide people with access to standards, new ideas and research, and to case studies that demonstrate potential, possibility and inspiration.
- In our role as representative, partner and leader, our advocacy is to convey the qualities and conditions that are unique to heritage and to support best practices and broader approaches, not to retain heritage for the sake of heritage, but to ensure that heritage makes a valued and sustainable contribution to the communities in which the assets are found.

We recognize local conservation challenges can be the result of systemic problems, gaps in policy, inconsistently applied practice, and limited objectivity. In response, we strive to present a thoughtful, balanced opinion with an approach that generates positive discourse and encourages reflection on the multiple perspectives of an issue.

We understand heritage is a broad field and the management and conservation of heritage assets is not black and white or right and wrong. We recognize good heritage practice is subject to a complex mix of influences, including the economic, environmental, societal, and legal factors, that affect conservation proposals and outcomes. As each situation is impacted by a unique mix of circumstances and conditions, each situation, therefore, must be considered individually and on its own merits.

Heritage BC



We recognize these complex issues are placing increasing pressure on the management and conservation of heritage assets. As advocate, we must champion accepted practice, while encouraging new opportunities and embracing creative new tools. And, as advocate, we work toward improved government policies and funding to improve and sustain the state of heritage conservation and the retention of heritage values, and to benefit from other values such as environmental resiliency and climate change.

As heritage embodies local stories, we recognize a community's right to determine its priorities and values. As advocate, our role is not to directly influence local decision-making, to align with a single side, or support the "correct" or "right" response to a situation. Instead, our role is to provide a perspective in a manner that contributes to and encourages a more nuanced investigation and reflective discourse.

Our role is also to be aware of provincial and national trends and to understand a larger context. We aim to provide useful, constructive information and to suggest other points-of-view.

Other Principles

- Heritage is a community concern; heritage practice it is about preserving and protecting what matters to communities (i.e., community values). Communities should be consulted and provide input in determining local priorities.
- A provincial framework exists for the protection and management of cultural heritage. Local Governments should adopt heritage conservation tools (e.g., Heritage Register, Community Heritage Commission, etc.) and establish procedures that guide local conservation. The process and procedures should be followed or, if found lacking, they should be further developed.
- The conservation of our built environment is important for reducing emissions and addressing the impacts of climate change.
- A priority must be placed on understanding and skilled knowledge. Process should include research, consultation, and multidisciplinary expertise.
- Heritage conservation is complex: perfect can be the enemy of good.
- Inactivity leads to neglect and abandonment. This is the nemesis of heritage conservation.

Criteria and Conditions

- Who is requesting the response? What is their relationship to the project and/or heritage asset?
- Has the Local Government adopted heritage tools? Has the Local Government adopted policies and procedures to manage and protect heritage assets? Are the policies and procedures being followed?
- Has a heritage consultant been involved in the development of the proposal?
- Is there sufficient time and resources to review the situation? Will an advocacy effort detract from other work?
- Can Heritage BC respond in a manner that is consistent with our advocacy message? Are we able to meaningfully contribute to the local discourse? Will our contribution have implications beyond the single issue?
- Does the situation appear to be isolated or might it have broader implications?

Heritage BC



- What is the national, provincial, regional and local significance of the asset, and is it at risk?
- Can at least two staff members and at least two directors consider and contribute to a proposed response?

What we don't do

- Second-guess the decisions of Local Government and their advisors (e.g., Heritage Commissions) in situations when it is apparent that good process has been followed and the tools available to Local Government have been used with good intentions.

Our Commitment to Advocacy

- Staff, committee members and directors will be clear and upfront with the kind of issues that form our "advocacy agenda". To achieve that, and to improve the effectiveness of our advocacy work, we will continually review and reflect on the quality, content and impact of our priorities and messages. We will consider what we learn from each effort, and we will apply the lessons learned to improve the effectiveness of our advocacy work and to better understand the issues.
- Whether we comment on a local situation or not, we will continue to address the root problems and systemic issues that undermine successful outcomes so that we help to strengthen the field as a whole.
- When we choose not to comment on an issue, we will continue our broader advocacy efforts and provide information and guidance.
- Our advocacy work will be constructive and positive, encouraging a fuller discourse that takes into account differing perspectives and influences.
- Our advocacy work will encourage new ways of thinking and progressive views so that the field is responsive to external changes and an evolving field.
- We may respond to issues when asked, but we will not automatically respond to all requests.
- The board and/or advocacy committee may wish to comment on a conservation proposal without an external request, but this will be considered an exception to the established practice. The above criteria remain in force.

Last updated March, 2020