To: Mayor and Members  
   Committee of the Whole  
   Outstanding Business Item No. E

From: Tim McCabe  
   General Manager  
   Planning and Economic Development Department

| Telephone:  | 905-546-2424 x4339 |
| Facsimile:  | 905 546-4364 |
| E-mail:     | tjmccabe@hamilton.ca |

Date: June 26, 2007

Re: Hamilton City Hall and National Historic Sites Status (PED07204) (Ward 2)

Council Direction:

That staff be directed to report back with information regarding the process and implications of National Historic Site status with regards to Hamilton City Hall.

Information:

National Historic Sites are declared, or “designated,” by the Minister of the Environment on the advice of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada is the statutory advisory body to the Minister of the Environment and, through the Minister, to the Government of Canada on the commemoration of nationally significant aspects of Canada's history.

The protection and presentation of national historic sites are major objectives of Canada's national commemorative program and the “designation” is not a legal mechanism (as is the one enabled under the Ontario Heritage Act), but rather National Historic Site status is honorific.

The most common form of commemoration entails the installation of a bronze plaque at the site. National Historic Site status raises a community's profile across the country and elevates the status of the heritage resource, which, in the long run, can result in opportunities such as funding, or tourism.

Once declared a National Historic Site, sites are not protected through designation at the federal level and the commemoration does not carry any actual powers of protection, rather, the Parks Canada Agency recommends that designation be implemented at the provincial level in order to provide for protection through provincial
legislation - in this case, the Ontario Heritage Act. The Hamilton City Hall is designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Process

The HSMBC’s agenda is in large part driven by public concerns as it responds to requests that places, people or events be declared of national historic significance. Consideration of the commemoration of national historic significance is made on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the Board's evaluation criteria and guidelines.

HSMBC carries out a formal evaluation of submitted requests based on their criteria and guidelines. In November 1997, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board recommended the following guidelines for Built Heritage of the Modern Era:

- 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
  
  1) 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
    
  2) It represents a precedent that had a significant impact on subsequent buildings, ensembles, or sites.

National Historic Sites of Canada Cost-Sharing Program

In addition to the plaque recognizing the sites status, national historic sites may be commemorated in other ways, but only in the most exceptional circumstances – these activities may include financial assistance under Parks Canada's National Historic Sites of Canada Cost-Sharing Program, and there may be other opportunities to tap into funding from other federal departments, for example the Department of Public Works.

National recognition by the HSMB and the Minister enables property owners to participate in Federal cost-sharing program for restoration and conservation works associated with national heritage sites—generally when these are emergency conservation issues. The City has taken advantage of such funding for work on Dundurn Castle and the Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology.

As part of this process it is usual for Parks Canada and the property owner to prepare a Commemorative Integrity Statement (CIS) that identifies the cultural value and significance of the property’s heritage attributes. Level 1 Resources, the most highly value resources, are usually those eligible for the cost-sharing program.
In 1987, the National Historic Sites of Canada Cost-Sharing program was created to make project funds available to the 700 National Historic Sites of Canada not owned by the federal government – funds are provided for the preservation of structures of national architectural significance. **Most importantly, this program seeks to increase site owners’ and managers’ awareness and understanding of commemorative integrity, as they work on specific conservation and/or renovation projects.**

Under the National Cost-Sharing Program, the Minister may enter into an agreement to contribute toward the cost of conserving a site or structure declared to be of national historic significance and, further, may provide professional and technical advice, subject to all of the following:

- The site or structure will be owned by a province, territory, municipality, or incorporated body.
- An agreement to share costs will be recommended by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.
- The site or structure will be accessible to the public.
- The use of the site or structure will not compromise or detract from the significance or integrity of that which is being commemorated.

Funds exist at the discretion of the Minister, and there is no set budget set aside for this program.

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Tim McCabe
General Manager
Planning and Economic Development Department

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