

## **Media Backgrounder: Heritage rehabilitation of Historic City Hall**

Historic City Hall has been repaired and renewed from its foundation to its roof.

Over the course of four years Historic City Hall was rehabilitated to last for the next 100 years. highlights include:

- Painstaking repairs to 97% of the building's 15,522 pieces of sandstone. About 1,350 tonnes of newly quarried sandstone were used to rehabilitate deteriorated sandstone. (That's about the weight of 11 three-car CTrains).
- 1,500 metres of old mortar have been removed and redone. (That's equivalent to the length of about eight Calgary Towers end to end).
- The roof was stripped, structurally fortified, and replaced. The original roof foundation of Douglas fir milled in Banff/Kananaskis in the early 1900s was saved whenever possible and some rotted areas were removed and replaced with new lumber and metal supports.
- About 400 red tiles from the roof are original to 1911. We ordered our replacement tiles from the same manufacturer that supplied the originals more than a century ago.
- The 100-foot clock tower was originally built with sandstone and bricks but no steel, and the tower had begun shifting slightly away from the building. We've corrected this with new internal steel bracing from the third floor up.
- Verandas, balconies, and cupola have all been structurally reinforced.
- 189 original wooden window frames were restored and preserved.
- The building's foundation and concrete have been repaired and a new site drainage system installed.
- The building has new exterior lighting.

### **Calgary's past as "Sandstone City"**

In 1886, just two years after Calgary became an official town, the Great Fire destroyed a substantial number of the city's wooden buildings which were located on the main commercial strip. Following the fire, Calgary transitioned from wood to more permanent and fire-resistant building materials, notably sandstone.

Between the mid-1880s and 1915, more than a dozen Paskapoo sandstone quarries operated in and around our current city limits. Sandstone was the preferred material for use in Calgary's public, commercial and residential buildings. Calgary became known across Canada as the "Sandstone City."

Hundreds of Calgary buildings from the 1800s and early 1900s boasted sandstone in their construction, and dozens of these buildings remain today. Historic City Hall is a beautiful example of Calgary's late Sandstone City era.

The last of Calgary's quarries closed in 1915, bringing our sandstone age to an end. High labour costs, the growing popularity of other building materials, and the end of Calgary's pre-WWI boom were all contributing factors.

## **Why heritage rehabilitation is so different than standard construction**

Rehabilitation of historic buildings differs greatly from new construction. The materials, methods and trades required for historical rehabilitation projects are scarce and costly.

Repairs to a 100-year-old building, intended to last for over another 100 years, require proportionately more time to plan. The protected status of designated heritage buildings means that any work must meet National Standards for the treatment of these properties. Throughout this project, statutory approvals were secured from both the Provincial and Municipal Heritage Approving Authorities, in accordance with the Alberta Historical Resources Act, prior to performing any work.

Throughout the rehabilitation, materials original to the building such as wood, tiles, metal, or sandstone were reused whenever possible. When a material was significantly deteriorated and could not be conserved and reused, it was replaced with new material.