

**Date:** Wednesday, January 31, 2018  
**To:** Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment  
**From:** Maria Lear, [REDACTED]  
**Re:** Municipal Legislation Review *City of St. John's Act*  
**Topic:** Deconstruction policy, salvage of heritage & non-heritage building materials

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Department of Municipal Affairs & Environment,

Please accept this submission as part of the ongoing public engagement opportunity for the Municipal Legislation Review with specific reference to the *City of St. John's Act*.

My concerns are related to heritage preservation, currently legislated under Section 355(1-9) within the *City of St. John's Act*

Please see below my proposal ideas for deconstruction & salvage of all available architectural & heritage building materials, and design features of any municipal, provincial & federal structures which have been approved for demolition. This has recently been discussed within a municipal meeting of the Built Heritage Experts Panel (BHEP) on January 17, 2018. At that meeting, the BHEP recommended that St. John's Council approve the idea of the salvage of heritage/non-heritage building materials during demolition as well as deconstruction & developing an information pamphlet for the public in order to raise awareness. This idea was discussed by the City of St. John's Council during a Committee of the Whole meeting on January 31, 2018. While this is a huge step in a positive direction, the City of St. John's currently does not have the legislative framework for which to mandate the recycling of building materials nor the ability to require deconstruction of heritage structures. It is for these reasons that I make my submission today so that new legislation can be drafted & introduced into the updated *City of St. John's Act*

I have long voiced my concerns to a number of St. John's City Council members regarding the condition, future use & preservation of several named structures (ex: Richmond Cottage, Bryn Mawr, Quinnipac) as well as other built heritage properties throughout the City & Province. I am an advocate for the preservation, restoration & continuing use of heritage buildings, however when all other efforts have been attempted & if demolition is the only action, I call for meaningful efforts to be employed to save, salvage & reuse all available elements of said structure by way of mindful deconstruction by hand – not speedy mechanical demolition.

Deconstruction is careful and selective dismantling & removal of materials from buildings instead of conventional demolition. In many places around the world & here in Canada, deconstruction is commonplace & favored as it offers benefits that are environmental, economic and heritage-friendly. Environmental, as it significantly decreases the amount of landfill waste, decreases the air/other exposure of hazardous materials during traditional demolition and promotes recycling & reusing of building materials. Economic, for job creation, reduce the need for purchasing new materials, and, in some places as acts as tax-relief for the owner who may be able to reduce (if not eliminate) the costs of demolition. Also, materials salvaged can be re-sold, auctioned or donated to those involved in reuse such as Habitat for Humanity ReStore or antique shops for use again in another residential or commercial building.

For those heritage buildings which are slated for demolition, I am thinking in terms of heritage & architectural salvage of all building materials as well fixtures & features.

- (1) Firstly, I would suggest the owner contact the Historic Trust and Heritage Foundation NL to have a conversation about the idea, discuss viable options, get advice & make an action plan. I am also working under the assumption that the municipal Built Heritage Experts Panel (BHEP) will be heavily involved.
- (2) I would also make it a requirement for the owner to ensure that pre-deconstruction, the structure is 'preserved by record' in that there is a full architectural survey, detailed building inventory, full photographic

recording of all building and design features from the viewpoint of heritage and history. Ideally, I would like to see this as well as archival information collected as publishable format, funded by the owner/developer.

- (3) Next I would suggest that the owner engage a contracting firm who may have deconstruction experience and will be able to advise on the methodology, time and cost analysis for this project. If there is not a named firm with this type of specific expertise, I am sure that those in this city who are experienced in dealing with heritage renovations and remodels will be able to assist. Architectural firms as well would be a good addition for expert opinion and suggestions. I also refer back to the current BHEP and former Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) for many professional people who would be a valuable resource
- (4) As with demolition, hazardous waste and mold concerns will also need to be addressed & plans conceived for mitigation before, during & after deconstruction. As with any building site, liability issues, insurance, health and safety & PPE will need to be sorted as well as a plan for protecting the surrounding homeowners from the activity of an active construction site.
- (5) That the owners be required to contact Habitat for Humanity as well as other salvage locations in and around the city so they are aware of the upcoming deconstruction. That the owners be required to notify the public that deconstruction is taking place (time, dates) & provide full information as needed. In keeping with a community heritage notion & acknowledging that many people would treasure such materials, I would like to see investigation into the idea that private individuals/public may be made aware of easily transported, smaller individual items for reuse within their personal property – available cost-free. For all other materials, the owner will provide careful loading, transport & delivery of salvaged items to relevant commercial or non-profit donation centres.
- (6) I would suggest the following items (but not limited to) be carefully deconstructed & salvaged for reuse. Some of these materials will be sorted by type/weight while others will be individually categorized:

- roof shingles
- chimney bricks
- exterior clapboard, doors and trims
- skylight
- exterior door knobs, locks, hardware
- all windows, including interior/exterior frames
- foundation stone, where available
- all interior doors & frames
- interior wood, beams, old-growth lumber, studs, etc
- interior wood flooring
- interior tile work
- copper piping
- heating radiators
- electrical materials, wiring, etc
- plumbing materials
- cast iron materials
- other metal elements, where available
- interior mouldings, trim, chair rails, wainscoting
- plasterwork, rosettes, crown mouldings
- cast-iron stair
- wooden stair treads, steps, risers, handrails and newel posts
- fireplace mantels (wooden/stone), lintels, hearth/hearth extensions, screens, existing tile work
- bathroom fixtures, sinks, toilets, etc
- all hardware (door knobs, switch plates, locks, etc)

- lighting fixtures
- + add to list where applicable

(7) For the deconstruction itself, a couple of ideas:

- photograph some objects *in situ* to show how the material was originally used, with particular reference to historic elements. For example, a photo of a door still in place with all the original hardware would be an interesting point of information for future users of the item. Another example would be staircases, sinks, lighting fixtures, mouldings, etc. Giving visuals & associated history links the reused item with the heritage & promotes careful stewardship of the item for the future.
- when deconstructing, bundle like items together as they are removed from the building. Use careful recording, itemization and a labeling or code system. This will make it much easier for the next users of the item. For example, take 1 window frame, shrink wrap and label as an easily-moveable package.

In recent years, there have been instances of heritage buildings being demolished without much regard to the historical appreciation or the architectural significance of the structure. Demolition by neglect for new residential/commercial builds has also occurred. This has to stop as built heritage is a unique and non-renewable resource. As such, we require updated rules & regulations to be added to municipal legislation so that careless and wasteful demolition situations never reoccur. Also, that there are strict, uncompromising, enforceable penalties and fines for those who choose not to follow the legislation and blatantly disregard Council directives. Lastly, that whatever circumstance, ambiguity & loophole existed to allow these instances to occur have been eliminated once & for all.

Regarding deconstruction as a standalone issue & given the fact that there are numerous benefits, I think that deconstruction should be in place for all buildings approved for demolition within the City, regardless of age or type. An added bonus would be that sometimes it would have positive heritage outcomes without trying. For example, if a deconstruction policy was part of the municipal legislation back in 2015, the lunchtime demolition of non-registered structure 25 Winter Avenue "Quinnipac" (including all *in situ* interiors) would have been avoided.

Thank you,

Maria Lear

