

August 28th, 2010

Leora Berman
The Land Between, Program Manager
P.O. Box 1368
Haliburton, ON, K0M 1S0

Dear Leora Berman

Thank you for the invitation to come look at the former industrial plant in Donald. Exploring the site provided for a great opportunity to see some remarkable early reinforced concrete construction as well as gain an insight into the industrial heritage of Central Ontario. After examining the chemical distribution building it is my opinion that this structure is worth saving and can be renovated for contemporary use. While the roof is in need of immediate attention, the superstructure was significantly overbuilt in its original design and will prove to be a good candidate for adaptive reuse.

The existing building shows the most deterioration is evident on the exterior at several exposed columns and on portions of the projecting concrete roof edge. The roof edge is the more significant priority in terms of repair because its deterioration is allowing water into the building and onto the concrete. There is also a section of roof missing. As a first priority it would be important to look at stopping the deterioration by addressing these roof issues. The roofs below the monitor have a sloped topping and ideally it would be good to reform the missing concrete projection and restore the topping. Portions of the building are parged and it is recommended that this partial coating be removed.

While the structure itself is quite stable, and there is no need to worry about the main body of the whole structure failing, it would be an early priority to make the building safe for site visits by removing very loose concrete sections of the roof overhang, bracing or stabilizing any loose masonry infill walls, and securing the building from unwanted access.

It would be important to have an overall plan for conservation of the building and a plan for its adaptive reuse. First to ensure that the expense of the project is minimized and that the priorities for work are clear. Second to ensure that all the work is actually required. In heritage conservation terms we sometimes use the term, 'minimal intervention', meaning doing only essential work so that the heritage character of the building remains. That would be the advice here. So for example the areas of arched brick infill may not be important for the structure of the building, and may require considerable repair, but they contribute to the overall character of the building. Removal of this brickwork would not be advised unless required by the intended adaptive reuse. This is in fact a very significant building for the history of Haliburton and part of an important industrial complex for the area.

I've attached two pdfs, one showing a postcard view of the plant itself and another providing an engineering description of the site. It is interesting that the roofs and floors used a system of chains held in tension called the Oneida Community chain fabric. This is the first use of this technology that I have seen. For their historical interest it would be worth considering an interpretative plan for the larger site including the more ruined structures across the street.

ERA was involved in the adaptive reuse of the Artscape Barns in Toronto, where a similar concrete building, in this case a complex of former streetcar service barns, was renovated into a mix-use facility that includes artist studios, a green house and farmer's market and a range of community programming. Surrounded by ample green space, the site has evolved into a thriving neighborhood hub. It is interesting to note that initially the Barns project was seen to be difficult because the concrete structures were not seen to be either of historical or aesthetic interest. Since their adaptive reuse there has been considerable acceptance of the project, the farmer's market is working very well and the design has won numerous awards. We think the same scenario can happen in Donald.

We wish you good luck with this very worthwhile endeavour. Should you wish further assistance please give me a call, and we would be glad to help.

Yours truly,



Michael McClelland OAA, FRAIC, CAHP
Principal, ERA Architects

Attachments:
Postcard
Industrial Plant – Donald Ontario