

Media Release

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Wolfville Theatre unveiling two heritage property plaques

Acadia Theatre building hosts official designation of Municipal and Provincial Heritage Property on October 13

There hasn't been a Wolfville building given municipal heritage status in 20 years, but the Acadia Theatre building has been designated a Heritage Property by both Wolfville and the Province of Nova Scotia. The double-barreled honour will be made official with a plaque unveiling at 1:00 pm on Saturday, October 13.

Federal, provincial and municipal dignitaries will be on hand to confirm the new status in a public event outside the theatre, home of Acadia Cinema Co-op's Al Whittle Theatre and Just Us Coffee Roasters Co-op's Wolfville Coffeehouse. The two co-ops jointly own the heritage building and have spent that last year stabilizing the building exterior. A conservation assessment was commissioned from DSRA Architects of Halifax which resulted in recommendations for several phases of repairs to exterior brickwork, windows and roof. Phase 1 priority repairs were completed to the original Main Street portion of the building on August 31.

Mark Crosby, building committee chair for the Acadia Cinema Co-op (ACC) was pleased with the results. "The work was contracted to Coastal Restoration and Masonry on the condition the work be completed before the busy summer season due to the building site being on the sidewalk on Main Street. We were fortunate to have had the services of MC Squared Management on a pro bono basis to help guide us through the construction management process. We are extremely pleased that the whole project was completed on time and on budget." Work on the roof was also completed at the end of August.

Wolfville's mayor Jeff Cantwell has remarked, "The iconic Acadia marquee which graces our Main Street has evolved into a touchstone reference for the Town's architectural guidelines and denotes the centre of the downtown's commercial core."

Project financing was provided by the two co-ops with ACC fundraising its half. "Once we communicated the need for repairs to the building envelope, our recent equity tax credit share sale resulted in many more share purchases than we expected," noted ACC treasurer Paul Callaghan. "I think these contributions demonstrate the value of the theatre to the community at large. Contributions from provincial and federal government programs made up the balance."

The Government of Canada provided a \$36,000 non-repayable contribution, through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's Innovative Communities Fund, to assist with the completion of the repairs.

"Our community infrastructure plays an essential role in bringing us together. These investments will help to preserve the structural integrity of the Acadia Cinema as a Municipal and Provincial Heritage Property. A community staple since 1911, it is one of the few remaining Main Street old-time cinemas in the province," says the Honourable Scott Brison, President of the Treasury Board, Minister of Digital Government and Member of Parliament for Kings-Hants.

The Province of Nova Scotia contributed \$10,000 through the Heritage Property program's Conservation Work Grant program. "I'm pleased to recognize the Acadia Theatre building as a heritage property in acknowledgement of its unique heritage values, architecture and construction," said Nova Scotia Communities, Culture, and Heritage Minister Leo Glavine. "Nova Scotia is blessed with a rich and diverse heritage that helps tell the story of our province and its many cultures. Protecting our province's heritage is important to Nova Scotians. Through heritage designations and recognitions such as this, we are ensuring our special heritage places

are protected and celebrated for generations to come. We were pleased to play a role in confirming the designation of this special place as a registered provincial heritage property.”

The Al Whittle Theatre is a soft-seat venue for film, theatre and music with a main hall with 160 seats and a studio screening room of 40 seats. Home to returning presenters such as Devour: The Food Film Festival, Night Kitchen, Edalene Theatre and Fundy Cinema Film Series, Whitflix Smartphone Film Festival, and the Retro Blockbusters Summer Film Series, this cultural venue has been active in Wolfville since 1911.

A. Ellsworth “Al” Whittle was the Acadia Cinema manager from 1953 until his retirement in 2000 after which the theatre was closed and put up for sale. The theatre sat empty until the two co-ops bought it and renovated it for the official opening in 2004. The multi-purpose theatre was named after its long-time manager, now 88, who remains an honorary board member and still takes tickets at Sunday matinees.

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