MEDIA RELEASE

RECOMMENDATION TO DISMANTLE BUILT HERITAGE COMMITTEE WILL SET HERITAGE BACK 50 YEARS

Ottawa, ON, November 16, 2026 -- Heritage Ottawa was shocked to learn that the City of Ottawa Governance Review, tabled November 12, 2026, is recommending that the Built Heritage Committee, comprised of councillors and four subject-matter experts, be dismantled and its mandate subsumed within two existing councillor-only standing committees: Planning and Housing (PHC) and Agriculture and Rural Affairs (ARAC).

"Since 1976, the City of Ottawa has benefited from the knowledge and insights of heritage professionals in the form of an *Ontario Heritage Act*-mandated advisory body. We were stunned to learn of this recommendation that would set heritage conservation in Ottawa back fifty years," said Heritage Ottawa president Katherine Spencer-Ross. "The dismantling of a highly respected committee created to advise on the city's rich heritage will be a terrible loss."

The councillor/citizen blended Built Heritage Committee (BHC) was created in the spring of 2013 as a sub-committee of PHC (evolving into a full Standing Committee of City Council in 2022) to replace a citizen-only heritage committee established in 1976, a year after the *Ontario Heritage Act* was enacted. As neighbourhoods faced intensifying development pressures, the City found efficiencies in merging elected officials with heritage content experts early in the decision-making process, to review, advise and assist Council on matters related to the OHA.

The public members of the BHC have had, with one exception, experience in the field of heritage conservation as practitioners, architects, and building owners. Their expertise and suitability were demonstrated through an application and review process before selection and appointments were made.

The important decisions to demolish, designate, and adapt heritage buildings to new uses, conferred under the OHA, require careful consideration. The contributions of heritage and architectural experts have proven to be invaluable to the process. According to City statistics, the BHC reviewed 175 staff reports during the last term of Council. To upload those onto already busy standing committees is the opposite of 'efficiency.'

"Removing this body and its knowledge from the evaluation process will take decision-making back to the bad old days of having five minutes at City Hall to plead the case for heritage before

councillors who are burdened with many complex planning files — many with little interest in heritage," said Ms. Spencer-Ross. "This is short-sighted and demonstrates a lack of understanding about why the advisory committee in its current form was established by the City in the first place."

City Council will be voting on the Governance Review recommendations on November 25 and Heritage Ottawa urges councillors to reject this misinformed proposal.

Media Contact: info@heritageottawa.org