

Province House: Virtual Reality – A Success Story

During the summer of 2018, thousands of visitors experienced *Province House: Virtual Reality*, an interactive and fully immersive exhibit that offered an experience of Province House like never before.

The exhibit provided visitors with a glimpse of *Province House National Historic Site* as it stood before conservation work began and after the building had been emptied of its furnishings. Visitors virtually strolled the halls, explored the great chambers, and even deconstructed a wall to learn more about the reasons for the current conservation project.

Youth engagement was key in developing this innovative way to provide visitors with unique access to Province House, through an ongoing partnership between Parks Canada and the University of Prince Edward Island.

Province House: Virtual Reality was designed and produced in collaboration with students from the *University of Prince Edward Island's Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering*. This unique program has a project-based curriculum that focuses on the engineering design process.

Plans are underway for next season, so stay tuned to learn how you can try *Province House: Virtual Reality* yourself in the future!



Visitors enjoying Province House: Virtual Reality, 2018, ©Parks Canada



"The Story of Confederation" in the upper foyer, Confederation Centre of the Arts, ©Parks Canada



Quick Tips for Visitors

Even though Province House is closed for conservation, Parks Canada continues to tell the story of the building and of Confederation in collaboration with the Confederation Centre of the Arts:

Explore **"The Story of Confederation"** exhibit at the Confederation Centre of the Arts (upper foyer), which includes an impressive replica of the Confederation Chamber. Free admission. Please contact chamber@confederationcentre.com if arriving with a group of 20 or more.

November - April: Saturdays only 10:00 - 3:00

Be sure to see Parks Canada's award-winning film, **"A Building of Destiny"** about the 1864 Charlottetown Conference, playing next to the Chamber replica at Confederation Centre.

Contact Us

Parks Canada is committed to sharing the story of this important conservation project at Province House National Historic Site.

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Stone by Stone Province House Conservation Project

Province House National Historic Site is currently closed for an extensive conservation project. The building is more than 170 years old and in pressing need of repair. Province House is a historic and complex building and this project presents the unique challenge of rehabilitating the structure, while respecting its heritage character-defining elements.

The Government of Canada is investing in the Province House project to conserve this structure, which is both the historic birthplace of Canada and the seat of Prince Edward Island's Provincial Legislature. This project began in 2015 and is slated to be completed in 2021. Full details of the project can be found on our website: www.parksCanada.gc.ca/provincehouse.

This periodic newsletter will delve deeper into the story of Province House and the efforts to save this iconic piece of our cultural heritage.

Photo courtesy of the Government of Prince Edward Island, 2013



Fast Facts

Province House National Historic Site was built between 1843 and 1847. It is both the historic birthplace of Canada and the seat of Prince Edward Island's Provincial Legislature.

- The first session of the Prince Edward Island Legislature was held in the building in January 1847.
- Province House is owned by the Province of Prince Edward Island and is operated as a national historic site by Parks Canada, thanks to an agreement signed with the Province in 1974.
- A major restoration project was undertaken by Parks Canada between 1979 and 1983 to restore a portion of the building to the 1864 period.
- Between 2011 and 2013, additional renovations were done in advance of the 2014 celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference.

Phase 2 Work has Begun

Phase two of the Province House conservation project is now underway. This phase will focus on the building structure, including the conservation of the exterior walls, and work related to the foundation, structural interior walls, floors and roof, as well as making the exterior of the building universally accessible.

Contractors have started work on the roof of the building. Worker protection measures and scaffolding were put in place and a thorough inspection took place. Existing slate tiles were removed from the roof deck and temporary roofing was installed. While this first stage of the work is complete, roof work will be carried out intermittently throughout the project.

Additionally, work has begun off-site on windows from the building. The windows were removed, catalogued and crated as part of phase one. They have been shipped to the contractor's work site in Ontario for restoration work. However, two windows are remaining on PEI and will be conserved by students from Holland College's Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program. An expert conservator will be working with students in this exceptional training experience.



View from west of Province House, 2018 ©Parks Canada



CC Image courtesy of Jelte van Geest on Flickr, 2010

Down Memory Lane

Province House has had a great many people work within its walls over the past 170 years. Each of these people has stories to tell of their experiences there. In this edition, we share a story from Sharon Larter, a former Parks Canada interpreter. Sharon tells us about restorations being done in the 1980s and a contentious matter with plaster.

Joaquin da Fondeca was the stone mason originally from Portugal. He had been involved with the cleaning of the exterior of Province House and in the 1980s, was asked to make plaster to repair the walls in the Legislative Library. The original plaster recipe called for cow hair, and to find the material, Joaquin went to a tannery in New Brunswick that was being torn down. He was able to retrieve the insulation that had been used for that building, which was made of cow hair. The recipe called for about 20 pounds of cow hair per square yard, but when he tried to use that blend, it was just too heavy. However, Joaquin persevered and used a cow hair mixture for all the rooms upstairs, including the Confederation Chamber.

Shortly thereafter, when the upstairs was nearly finished, a different contractor was hired to replaster rooms on the ground floor. This was during the winter, and try as they might, this contractor could not find any cow hair for the project. They tried to buy some from Joaquin, but he wouldn't sell to them, so they had to find a farmer that would let them shave his cow! In the end, this mixture wasn't quite as good as the one used upstairs and if you look very closely, you can see a difference.

Thanks for the memories, Sharon!

An Evolving Team of Experts

The Province House conservation project is managed by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), on behalf of Parks Canada. In October 2017, PSPC awarded a contract for construction management services to PCL Constructors Ltd. PCL will manage the sub-contractors and tendering processes for phases two and three. The contracts for windows and the roof were both recently awarded to Ultimate Construction Ltd. from Barrie, Ontario.



The Province House conservation project team, including representatives from Parks Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada, and the Province of PEI, as well as consultants from the firms DFS, RMA and construction manager PCL. (Photo courtesy of PCL).

Behind Closed Doors

Curious to see what the inside of Province House looks like during this conservation project?

Check out this 360° photo array of various locations, including the Confederation Chamber and the Legislative Assembly:
www.pei360vr.com/PH2018/index.html



New Roof, New Approach

Restoring and improving the roof of Province House is pivotal to conserving Canada's birthplace. With new insulation and a waterproof layer topped with brand new purple slate shingles, the new roof will cure the chronic problem of water infiltration. (Photo courtesy of PSPC).

As the conservation of Province House continues, a key part of the project will see the replacement of the building's copper and slate roof. The new roof will preserve the heritage-defining characteristics of the original design. An integral element of the historic character of the 170 year-old building, the roof has also been the source of some chronic problems. Thanks to combining traditional materials with new, state-of-the-art components and high-quality design, the roof will not only be restored, but also improved.

Over the years, water infiltration through the roof near the eaves and the annual freeze – thaw cycle has been the greatest enemy of the building's stone masonry exterior walls. The new roof will enhance water management and prevent water entering into the walls. New insulation will reduce ice build-up and damming on the roof, ensuring that the structure will be better protected from nature's battering. There will also be less on-going maintenance and repairs required.

Reflecting the original heritage of the building, the roof features new copper cladding, thermal insulation and new slate shingles brought in from the United Kingdom, which is where the original slate came from when the building was first constructed. The current slate roof was installed in the 1980s, replacing asphalt shingles that had been installed sometime before. The new purple slate replaces this current slate material which came from a quarry in Vermont.

The work includes removing the slate and copper to allow for a more detailed assessment of the underlying roof structure. During the replacement, the temporary roof will be completely weather tight. The new roof will be completed in 2019.

