

Insurance & Heritage Properties

There are numerous resources available to help heritage property owners navigate the process of insuring an older and/or historically recognized structure.

There are two main reasons why insurance companies are sometimes hesitant to insure heritage buildings:

1. The perception that heritage buildings may carry a higher risk due to the age of the building fabric, such as wiring, pipes, heating equipment, foundations, and roofs.
2. The view that it is too expensive for insurance companies to replace the materials of Ontario Heritage Act designated heritage buildings “with like kind and quality,” if a claim is made.

To reduce age-related risks for insurance companies, you can take the following steps:

- Ensure your property is compliant with relevant building codes
- Install smoke detectors and alarm systems
- Assess and replace old-style knob-and-tube wiring, if necessary
- Update and/or upgrade your roof, heating system (forced air or electric) and plumbing (galvanized cast iron to copper and/or PVC)
- Consider installing sewer backflow valves
- If your building has an oil tank, ensure it is inspected and maintained regularly
- If the property is semi-detached or a row house of any age, insurers may want proof of an adequate fire-break between the buildings

If you own a property designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, contact your municipality to verify what would be required in the case of an insurance claim. Not all designation bylaws require that a building be reconstructed using the exact same materials as the original, and most designations only cover the exterior of heritage buildings, not the interior construction.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada offers five tips for all heritage homeowners seeking insurance:

1. Shop around for the most suitable policy and price
2. Consider the claims settlement process and the deductible



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Practical Conservation Guide for Heritage Properties

4. Keep accurate records of the unique features of your heritage home
5. Make sure to purchase enough insurance coverage (i.e. guaranteed replacement cost coverage)

If you have specific questions about insuring your heritage property, contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

There are a number of useful resources available to help guide you through the process of insuring your heritage property:

- Insurance Bureau of Canada's brochure, "**Heritage Properties: Insuring the Living Past**"
- Insurance Bureau of Canada's brochure, "**Insuring your heritage home**"
- Insurance Bureau of Canada's **contact information** for regional and head offices
- Heritage Canada The National Trust's "**Insurance**" **webpage**
- Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's resource, "**Insurance and heritage properties**" (2012)
- Province of Nova Scotia's brochure, "**Insuring Old Homes in Nova Scotia**"
- Articles:
 - "**Getting insurance for your heritage property: Insurance industry working to make it easier**," (Héritage, Winter 2005)
 - "**What's Your Policy? Owners Face Insurance Woes on Older Homes**" (Héritage, Spring 2004)

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request. Please contact Bridget Coady at BCoady@regionofwaterloo.ca, 519-575-4500 ext. 3112, TTY 519-575-4608 to request an alternate format.

Disclaimer

This practical guide contains useful information on restoring and preserving heritage buildings, but it is intended as a general resource only. Content from third parties with specific expertise has been heavily relied upon and their original works have been acknowledged in the list of references included at the end of this document. The Region of Waterloo has taken all reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication. However, it is recommended that building owners consult with trained specialists, such as contractors, builders, plumbers, heating and air professionals and electricians, before undertaking any renovations, repairs or construction on their properties. The Region does not assume responsibility for any loss or damage resulting from adherence to the information in this practical guide.