

Managing growth pressures

October 3, 2007

Province considers redeveloping Edmonton's historic Federal Building

Edmonton... A preliminary engineering study to assess the feasibility of redeveloping the Federal Building in Edmonton is underway.

“There’s always been a high level of interest in government and the community to renew this signature building,” said Luke Ouellette, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. “But first, we need to see if it is feasible from a technical perspective. That’s why we commissioned the preliminary engineering study.”

The study, being conducted by Edmonton-based Manasc Isaac Architects Ltd., will identify development options as well as technical alternatives for retrofitting the Federal Building with modern mechanical and electrical systems. The consultant has also been asked to develop options for underground parking and a landscaped plaza between the Federal Building and the Bowker Building. In the future, these development options for the Federal Building and adjacent plaza will be integrated into an overall development plan that will examine alternative uses for the Legislature Annex and Terrace Building sites.

Previous attempts in 1993 and 2000 to redevelop the Federal Building were unsuccessful because in each case, the successful bidder was unable to make the project financially viable without government participation.

“A lot has changed since then,” said Ouellette. “First, the commercial real estate lease market in Edmonton has become extremely tight. Second, Alberta’s growth is increasing the demand for government services and that’s creating space pressures for us. Last, government has concluded the Federal Building is the key to other potential future projects on the Legislature Grounds. In short, this is the best opportunity we’ve had in years to make the Federal Building viable.”

The study should be complete by the end of the year. Government will consider the study’s recommendations before making any further decisions about the future of the Federal Building.

Revitalizing the Federal Building is one of the actions under Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to manage growth pressures. Other priorities for the government are to improve Albertans’ quality of life, govern with integrity and transparency, build a stronger Alberta, and provide safe and secure communities.

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Attachment: Backgrounder attached

Media enquiries may be directed to:

Jerry Bellikka, Communications
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Federal Building facts

- Constructed: 1958
- Designed by: George Heath MacDonald
- Primary use: vacant since 1989
- Gross floor area: 33,000 m²
- Usable office space: 23,000 m²
- Number of Floors: 10 storeys
- Site area: 1.04 hectare
- Underground parking: 20 spaces
- Number of Occupants: vacant, but could hold 700 office workers.
- Construction: Steel frame structure with columns built off large concrete pad footings. The floors are concrete.
- Exterior: granite and limestone veneer, wood sash windows.
- Interior: the main entrance is art deco style, with inset marble floors, nickel-plated metal work and decorative ceilings in the ornate style of the 1930s. The balance of the interior features normal finishes for a building constructed in the 1950s, such as lath and plaster.
- Most electrical and mechanical systems are original equipment.
- Asbestos is present in many areas of the building.

Possible options considered in the past for the Federal Building included sale, demolition of the building and retention of the land, or redevelopment of the Federal Building for government use either through a P3 proposal call or through the more traditional government design-tender-construct approach.

The Government of Alberta purchased the Federal Building in 1983 as part of a three-way land deal with the City of Edmonton and the Government of Canada.

- The Federal government sold to the City of Edmonton the Prince of Wales Armoury, Southside Post Office land, the Ortona Armoury and some land at 118 Avenue/170 Street.
- The Federal government sold to the province the Federal Building and associated lands for \$20,500,000. The Federal Building land was seen as an anchor for the northeast corner of the site.
- The City of Edmonton sold to the Federal government the land upon which Canada Place sits.

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