Two More Heritage Buildings Revitalized Through Heritage Tax Incentive

Date: Monday, September 12, 2011 For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC – This Tuesday, media are invited to tour two newly refurbished heritage buildings: the Oriental Hotel and The Churchill.

To celebrate the completion of the rehabilitation of the 1883 Oriental Hotel and its transformation into 29 new residential apartments on the upper floors, developer Chris Lefevre of Lefevre and Company is hosting a tour for the media, Mayor Dean Fortin and members of Council.

Following the tour of the Oriental Hotel, media, Mayor and Council are invited to another recently completed tax incentive project – The Churchill. This $3.7 million rehabilitation restored two heritage buildings – known as the Finch Building and the Portland Hotel – into 40 rental apartments now known as The Churchill.

What: Tour of the Oriental Hotel and The Churchill
When: Tuesday, September 13. Oriental Hotel tour is at 12:15 p.m., The Churchill at 1 p.m.
Both properties are within close walking distance.

Vacant for decades, the completion of the Oriental Hotel project marks the 26th heritage building rehabilitated and seismically upgraded under the City’s Heritage Tax Incentive Program. The program began in 1998 and allows 10 year tax exemptions to provide financial assistance for the conversion of vacant or underutilized upper floors of heritage buildings in downtown Victoria. To date this program has created 538 new residential units and attracted $181 million in new private investment to revitalize the downtown core.

This event is not open to the public.

For More Information:

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BACKGROUND ATTACHED
CITY OF VICTORIA
Backgrounder

Oriental Hotel
The Oriental Hotel is an excellent example of a late 19th century Victoria Italianate hotel, and is notable as the work of the prominent architect John Teague, the designer of Victoria’s City Hall. Elements relating to Teague’s design include the extensive use of tall upper storey bay windows and distinct ground-storey arches - made possible by the use of cast iron columns - and reflect the state-of-the-art architectural idiom of the 1880s.

Begun in 1883, this building is notable as one of the first hotels in the Old Town District. Its 1888 expansion, which doubled its size to include additional rooms, unique cantilevered corner bay windows, and a west façade over Oriental Alley, reflects a continued belief in the economic prosperity of the competitive hotel industry which thrived in Victoria’s late 19th century economy.

Owned for many years by Goodwill Industries, the upper floors were vacant for decades. The $6 million rehabilitation combined 2 buildings, the Oriental Hotel and the 1882 Stewart building at 560 Yates Street and was supervised by architect Ray Hunt. The project utilized an ingenious floor plan to use the existing light wells as hallways to the units on the upper floors, while gaining efficiency with a single elevator to serve both buildings.

The Churchill
The Churchill is the combination of two rehabilitated heritage buildings, known as the Finch building, at 719 Yates Street, and the Portland Hotel at 721-725 Yates. The developer, Churchill Properties, carried out a $3.7 million heritage renovation, converting the buildings into 40 rental apartments.

The Finch Building was built in 1910 during the pre-World War One real estate boom, and is valued as a reflection of the surge of development that occurred as Victoria matured as an economic gateway to the United States, Britain and Asia. It was originally owned by Finch & Finch and was purpose-built as a 20-room office building with storefront space on the ground level. The neighbouring Portland Hotel was built in 1909, and the Victoria Building Company was the first owner but the building was sold during construction to the Sylvester Feed Co., as an investment property. The ground floor was commercial with the upper floors used as the Portland Hotel, catering to travellers in a city experiencing growth in trade and commerce and developing as a global tourism destination. The scale of the building reflects the optimism and rapid growth of the Edwardian era prior to the collapse of the local economy in 1913 and the First World War.