

Heritage group looks to revitalize Canada's city centres



Two shops on the main street in Perth before renovation.

The small eastern Ontario town of Perth has been chosen by the Heritage Canada Foundation to take part in a pilot project designed to rejuvenate downtown areas across the country.

The town of 6,000, which was considered representative of the gamut of conditions faced by many Canadian "main streets", will receive a facelift that is expected to make it look better and healthier economically.

During the next two years Heritage Canada will work with the town business community to renovate buildings, improve window displays, promote a strong



The same two shops after receiving a facelift by Heritage Canada.

image for downtown, redesign signs, co-ordinate store hours and promotion, and improve public spaces.

Before Heritage Canada became involved in Perth, the town had already received funds for development from the Ontario government, the Ontario Heritage Foundation and support from Parks Canada.

In fact over the next three years Perth will see more changes than it has experienced in the past 50 years, most of those focusing on the way the town looks.

In order to renew the town and yet keep the history of Perth intact, Heritage

Canada is financing a consultant's study on design and working drawings for a beautification and public improvement project which is already underway.

Heritage Canada representatives say they are not looking for miracles or overnight changes, but for a carefully tailored incremental approach that can be continued by the town into the future.

The foundation is also looking to gain experience in rehabilitating a downtown — experience it can share with other communities throughout Canada.

These towns will be chosen in a national competition open to all towns. The applicants will be evaluated for architecture, setting, economic situation, organizational commitment and administrative capacity.

Computer gives health information

A computerized education program developed by the Montreal Institut de recherches cliniques (IRCM) has made it possible for people suffering from high blood pressure to obtain answers to questions about their illness without having to see a physician.

The Système d'information et de communication (SIC) is the brainchild of Dr. Michel Bourque, director of the IRCM information and biostatistics centre, and his team.

The SIC will be placed in the waiting rooms of hospitals, where it will be available to patients and to the general public. The system consists of a micro-computer, a small television screen and a keyboard not unlike those found on some telephones. It is very simple to use and does not require any programming. The answers are obtained simply by composing a number on the keyboard.

This device can answer all kinds of questions on treatment, prevention and medication, and it also asks questions in turn. Questions, answers and the frequency of the questions are recorded automatically, thus giving health specialists information about patient interests and concerns. For example, it was observed during tests at the IRCM that patients would ask the computer questions they were afraid to ask physicians.

At present there is only one "disk" on high blood pressure, but the program designers plan to produce others soon. Among the subjects being prepared are diabetes, Parkinson's disease, hyperlipidemia and arteriosclerosis, sex education as well as Quebec health services.