TO: The Executive Policy Committee **SENT: February 15, 2021**
FOR: The February 17, 2021 EPC Meeting

RE: The proposed designation of 333 Broadway, current WCB Building

> Upon reaching the ground or main floor by elevator,
> the openness and airiness of this floor is enlightening.
> The main entrance doors to the left surrounded
> by glass expanses at the sides give a clear view of the
> outside. The stainless steel curtain wall supporting the glass
> gives a pleasant atmosphere without being cloying,
> brisk and clean, but not cold, and colourful without being
> blatant.
> - from *The Monarch Life Building: A construction report on a Winnipeg building of architectural significance, located on Broadway Ave., the new financial centre* (c 1961), p. 45

> [lead designer Jim] Donohue's rethinking of the conventional
> office type produced in the Monarch Life Building a series of
> complex and varied spaces which remain a delight and
> inspiration to this day.
> - Kelly Crossman, architectural historian, "The Meaning of White" from *Winnipeg Modern Architecture 1945-1975* (2006), eds Keshavjee and Enns, p. 141

> The former Monarch Life Building became the former North
> American Life Assurance Company Building and became the Workers
> Compensation Building. In time, this renowned and unique structure
> will have other owners—other trustees who care for it on behalf of future
> Winnipeggers, Manitobans and Canadians. Will the building's exterior and
> interior be protected for them?
> - Gail Perry, the question before us today

As a lifelong Winnipegger and architectural history commentator, writer, researcher and frequent tour guide of this building, I support the proposed exterior and lobby designation of 333 Broadway.

The lobby is the one inside space as important as the exterior. The glassy, airy nature of a Modernist interior of this type (sometimes called "Miesian")—its sparkling, voluminous, main floor space that glows out to the street and invites the outside in—cannot be separated from its exterior. They are an expansive, unified flow of glass, light, stainless steel, polished stone and the spirit of post World War II Winnipeg. This is the story that 333 Broadway tells in its present, its original, form.

The current building owner balks at lobby designation and has plans afoot to make substantive changes to it. As recently as the last hearing of this proposed designation (the SPC meeting of the PDHDD on January 18th), the owner expressed a willingness to work with heritage experts in making those changes. It has now

withdrawn that offer from the table. Moreover, it has now made its support of protecting the exterior (what it spent 14 million dollars to painstakingly restore in 2011-2013) contingent on leaving the lobby undesignated. If that is truly the owner's intention, this building is now especially in need of heritage protection.

That the owner has already begun pursuing changes to the lobby is discouraging and should not be used to its advantage as a reason for not protecting the original fabric of this space. The owner must have known that this would be a space sought for designation.

This owner is well aware of successful heritage compromise from the work it enthusiastically championed on the exterior. For example, by necessity, the angle of the new exterior windows had to differ from the original. The result was a resounding success, hardly distracting from the original design. Similarly, there needed to be a "seam" added to the re-worked east and west facades of the building. The solution was to have this rendered in stainless steel, a recurrent material throughout the building. With the exterior work it undertook, the owner overcame the challenges that this one-of-a-kind 1960s building posed.

Such creative solutions can potentially be found for the lobby, for example, for a needed main floor public washroom and new light covers, either found or manufactured, to provide a similar look. It is not unusual for similar but different materials to be used or created in Winnipeg heritage projects (it was the owner's great fortune that it could work with the original quarry for the few new granite replacements needed in the exterior restoration; such good fortune is rarely the case). It takes an intention to do the right thing. And it takes collaboration with experts.

Today, we are looking at the preservation of a volume of space, a void, comprising the building's interior and exterior. We cannot forget that the building was designed from the inside out. Each exterior "layer" represents a different interior function: the recessed glass-walled ground floor lobby; the cantilevered mid-portion office space hovering over the lobby (floors two to five); the recessed sixth story executive floor (already considerably changed inside to meet the owners' needs) and the further recessed elevator penthouse. The employee offices and executive offices are for the owner's business. The lobby was built to accommodate the public. **The inconvenient truth, it seems, is that what is under consideration is a public interior space that, by its unique nature, is also an exterior element of a city landmark; by choosing to own that landmark, a sophisticated, private company (with a very public face) chose to become its custodian.**

I urge that you support the designation of the exterior and interior lobby space of Winnipeg's 333 Broadway.

Respectfully submitted-- Gail Perry