

## Statement of Integrity

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- 1. Common name of the evaluated property (e.g., The Smith Residence,")**  
Finlay Bridge
- 2. Civic address / legal description of the evaluated property**  
The property municipally described as Finlay Bridge, in the City of Medicine Hat in the Province of Alberta, which forms part of 2 Avenue NE and spans over the South Saskatchewan River connecting 2 Street NE and 1 Street SE.
- 3. Name and contact information for the registered owner of the evaluated property**  
City of Medicine Hat  
City Hall  
580 First Street SE  
Medicine Hat, AB  
T1A 8E6
- 4. Description of Historic Place (From the Statement of Significance)**  
Finlay Bridge is a traffic and foot bridge crossing the South Saskatchewan River, connecting the north (Riverside) and south side (Downtown) of Medicine Hat. Constructed of steel, concrete, and wood, this 900 foot span, officially opened on May 14, 1908
- 5. Applicable Significance Criteria (Adapted from the Statement of Significance)**



Theme / Activity /  
Cultural Practice / Event

✓ Yes    ☐ No

Despite Medicine Hat's two banks being connected by a rail bridge since 1883 and a small ferry service originally operated by the North West Mounted Police, Finlay Bridge meant that Medicine Hat and Southeast Alberta were truly linked to the rest of the new province of Alberta. Its heritage value lies in its role to move people across the South Saskatchewan River in a manner that enhanced the growth of the community and movement of people through the province and as a connection to other provinces. Finlay Bridge represents the theme of "Transportation and Communication Crossroads" whereby the early establishment of the bridge for vehicular transportation brought people, services and products to Medicine Hat. This established it as a regional transportation centre and therefore, was significant to the development of the community.

Finlay Bridge was one of the first bridges built in western Canada with thoughts of the coming transportation revolution; the ribbon was cut the same year that Ford's Model T's began rolling off the assembly line. Until the current Trans-Canada Bridge was built in 1953, Finlay Bridge was part of the original Trans-Canada Highway, the only place for traffic to cross 90 miles in either direction.

The bridge connected Medicine Hat's core to Riverside, and what would become Crescent Heights, integrating the community more thoroughly with the surrounding economy. Cattle could be moved between pasture and to market without waiting for a low river or paying to have them loaded onto cattle cars. People were no longer dependent on the ferry which could not operate until the river was completely clear of ice (and did not operate on Sundays when people risked their lives to cross the rail bridge by foot). As truck transport developed, the bridge became a link for goods from further afield.



Institution / Person

☒ Yes ☐ No

Finlay Bridge is named for William Thomas Finlay: Mayor of Medicine Hat from 1900-1902, representative for Medicine Hat in the Territorial Government 1902-1905, and Medicine Hat's first representative in the Alberta Legislature 1905-1910. As MLA and Minister of Agriculture, he advocated for many improvements to the region, perhaps most notably the bridge.

It was in his role as Minister of Agriculture and MLA for Medicine Hat that W.T. Finlay had his greatest impact. As a mayor and representative in the Territorial Government, Finlay always advocated for his region, and it was on a platform of infrastructure development for southeast Alberta that saw him elected to the first session of the Alberta Legislature. During this first session he advocated for the construction of the \$140,000 bridge in Medicine Hat as well as straighter passable roads throughout the southeast corner.

Finlay Bridge officially opened on May 14, 1908 with significant fanfare. Along with hundreds of Medicine Hatters, in attendance was Premier Alexander Rutherford, Honourable William Henry Cushing: Minister of Public Works, and the Honourable William Thomas Finlay. It was at this event that the bridge was officially named Finlay Bridge.



Design / Style / Construction

☒ Yes ☐ No

Mr. Ainsworth, of the Department of Public Works stated that "this structure will be the largest of its kind in Alberta and certainly one of the most modern in Western Canada" (Medicine Hat News, Dec. 13, 1906). At slightly over 900 feet in length, it was touted as the longest steel traffic bridge in the province. It is a riveted steel construction, with cast-in-place concrete piers and abutments and five spans of curved chord Pratt trusses resulting in a structure that has high artistic value. The detailing and complexity of the curved chorded Pratt trusses articulate a concept of design that express an aesthetic ideal that has been uniquely preserved.

Finlay Bridge is a period example of a combination of manual and automated construction methods. Large crews were required for the construction, and 30 to 40 teams of horses were used to haul in gravel for the concrete. Steam powered pumps were used to drain the water from the coffer dams used in the making of the piers and a steam powered pile driver was also employed.

Structurally, Finlay Bridge consists of abutments on each bank of the river, 4 concrete piers (40 feet of which are above the bed and 25 feet which are below), and five steel arches (measuring 31 feet in height and 180 feet length). The bridge, as originally constructed, was 28 feet wide with a wood deck and a wood sidewalk running along the west side of traffic. A six foot sidewalk was later added between 1908 and 1917 on the east side of traffic. At the time of construction, Finlay Bridge was the longest steel bridge in Alberta, and the second longest across the South Saskatchewan when built. The Traffic (Victoria) Bridge in Saskatoon was completed months earlier and was modestly longer, however, it is now closed.

The bridge was upgraded for preservation and functional purposes in 2009.



Information Potential

☐ Yes    ☒ No



Landmark / Symbolic Value

☒ Yes    ☐ No

The bridge established and maintains a dominate visual characteristic over the South Saskatchewan River especially for the pedestrian walking along the river and escarpment trail system. The depths of the history of the bridge's transportation purpose, the significance of Mr. Finlay and design of the bridge have all established Finlay Bridge as a landmark and symbol that citizens and tourists recognize as a part of the city's development and aesthetic qualities. The bridge was further enhanced with the addition of lighting that in the evening illuminates its landmark status. The lighting initiative was inspired and achieved by the community's interest of wanting to further highlight its significance as a landmark and transportation symbol in the city.

## 6. Period of Significance

*(The timeframe which best embodies the heritage values of the place. The period of significance may be later than the time of construction).*

The historical significance of Finlay Bridge lies with the impact it had for the people of Medicine Hat and southeast Alberta in the first half of the twentieth century, its size, and its namesake and most vocal advocate, William Thomas Finlay.

Finlay Bridge officially opened on May 14, 1908. Although Medicine Hat's two banks had been connected by a rail bridge since 1883 and a small ferry service originally operated by the North West Mounted Police, Finlay Bridge meant that Medicine Hat and Southeast Alberta were truly linked to the rest of the new province of Alberta.

Finlay Bridge is a symbol of being part of Alberta for the people of this region. As the potential of prairie provinces was debated leading up to 1905, Medicine Hatters did not

know what province their town would be a part. Without this physical link, the connection to the new Province of Alberta would likely have been more strained.

Finlay Bridge is named for William T. Finlay: Mayor of Medicine Hat from 1900-1902, representative for Medicine Hat in the Territorial Government 1902-1905, and Medicine Hat's first representative in the Alberta Legislature 1905-1910. As MLA and Minister of Agriculture, he advocated for many improvements to the region, perhaps most notably the bridge

## 7. Illustrated list of Character-Defining Elements

*At the end of this Statement of Integrity document, please include an appendix of photographs of each character-defining element at time of evaluation. The following character-defining elements are extant and contribute to the overall integrity of the plan (From the Statement of Significance):*

The character-defining elements include:

- Size;
- Continuous use;
- Riveted steel construction;
- Cast-in-place concrete piers and abutments; and
- Five spans of curved chord Pratt trusses.

*Does this resource retain the character-defining elements that enable it to communicate its significance?*

✓ Yes ☐ No

## 8. Chronology of Alterations *(If known, describe, in as much detail as possible, the alterations which have been undertaken to the property being evaluated, including when they took place).*

The only alteration to the bridge was in the form of a six foot sidewalk that was later added between 1908 and 1917 on the east side of traffic.

Although an exact date is unknown, photos below show the original bridge did not have the east sidewalk and a later photo in 1917 shows the addition.



*Finlay Bridge, 1908, Esplanade Archives*



*Finlay Bridge, 1917, Esplanade Archives*

In 2011 and in response to community requests, 78 LED decorative lights were added to the bridge to celebrate and enhance the character of the historic structure and its landmark status.

## 9. Aspects of Integrity

Does this resource retain the aspects of integrity that enable it to communicate its significance? *(For each applicable aspect of integrity, explain why the resource does or does not retain integrity).*

**Location** ✓ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

Finlay Bridge retains its original 1908 constructed location which is just west of the original Canadian Pacific Railway bridge. It remains to serve both vehicular and pedestrian movement across the South Saskatchewan River therefore, also serving its original purpose in this location.

**Design** ✓ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The structural system, form, massing, pattern of fenestration, and type and style of detailing remain exactly as they originally were constructed. The upgrades in 2009 took extra care to ensure that functional upgrades were done with the quality and integrity that the original bridge had established and maintained over the years. It is not believed the green colour on the bridge is original however, for as far back as can be remembered, the bridge has been painted green and therefore, was upgraded to remain the same. This was not included in the Character-defining elements given not being able to trace the original colour.

**Environment** ✓ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

Finlay Bridge retains its integrity as a significant structural feature crossing the South Saskatchewan. It remains as the key connection between the Downtown and Riverside residential community. Finlay Bridge frames another city landmark in Riverside which is Saint Patrick's Church therefore reinforcing the integrity of the environment in which the bridge was constructed.

**Materials** ✓ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The materials and original inter-relationships from its original construction have been retained and upgraded with the same original materials.

**Workmanship** ✓ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The workmanship remains as a period example of a combination of manual and automated construction methods. This workmanship was later replicated in the upgrades with a combination of methods to ensure the integrity was retained.

**Feeling** ✓ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The bridge was designed structurally as a reflection of the design, materials, workmanship and craftsmanship that were representative of that time. The feeling of that time period remains.

**Association** ✓ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

Finlay Bridge retains its association with transportation that it originally served. This includes the vehicular and pedestrian connection between an established residential neighbourhood and the downtown. On April 4, 1908, James Fleming was the first to cross the bridge, with horse and rig. Therefore, representing a direct link between its original purpose and continued purpose.

## 10. Statement of Integrity

Finlay Bridge maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance/heritage value as transportation connection that made a significant contribution to the early establishment of the city's development pattern. This included establishing it as regional transportation centre that played a role in developing the city's economies (Theme/Activity/Cultural/Event – "Transportation and Communications Crossroads"), the significance of the bridge's name to William Thomas Finlay (Person/Institution), the distinctive structural design and artistic value of the bridge (Design/Style/Construction) and the prominence and continued use of the historical structure (Landmark/Symbolic).

The evaluated property is deemed by the municipality to have both significance and integrity and therefore satisfies the requirements for designation as a Municipal Historic Resource. This Statement of Integrity is required as part of the mandatory documentation for listing the property on the Alberta Register of Historic Places.

### **Name and Position of Municipal Council Appointee / "Certification Officer"**

#### ***Name***

Ray Barnard

#### ***Position***

- ☒ Chief Administrative Officer, Municipal Services
- ☐ Planner
- ☐ Development Officer
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Municipal contact information

City of Medicine Hat, City Hall  
580 First Street SE  
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8E6

c/o Jeanie Gartly, Superintendent of Planning Services  
403-525-8820  
jeagar@medicinehat.ca

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**Signature of Reviewer**

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**Date**

# Statement of Integrity

## APPENDIX

### Photo Report of Character-Defining Elements

#### The East and West Facade

The following architectural elements are Regulated Portions:

- Size;
- Riveted steel construction;
- Cast-in-place concrete piers and abutments; and
- Five spans of curved chord Pratt trusses.

#### Illustrative Details



*Photograph showing Finlay Bridge's size*



*Photographs showing the riveted steel construction on Finlay Bridge*



*Photographs showing the cast-in-place concrete piers and abutments*



*Photograph showing five spans of curve chord Pratt trusses*



*Photographs showing a span of the curved chord Pratt trusses*

## The North and South Facade

The following architectural elements are Regulated Portions:

- Continuous use:
- Riveted steel construction:
- Cast-in-place concrete piers and abutments: and
- Five spans of curved chord Pratt trusses.

### Illustrative Details



*Photographs showing the continuous use, riveted steel construction, curved chord Pratt trusses*