

# Chiefswood needs help

The sad state of the old Chiefswood mansion shows up all the more now that there is a shiny new plaque in front of it honoring E. Pauline Johnson. The plaque is a handsome one, in English, French and Mohawk, and it was placed there on the weekend by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, with all appropriate ceremony. But plaques don't fix roofs, repair walls and windows, or rebuild crumbling foundations. That takes money, lots of it, and money is the one thing that the federal government has not yet contributed.

Others have recognized the need to restore this historic structure, built 133 years ago by Chief George Johnson, father of the famous poet. The museum restoration committee has raised \$90,000 from bodies such as the Ontario Heritage Foundation, the Six Nations, the City of Brantford, the CNR, and the United Empire Loyalists. Other donations will no doubt come from area municipalities or groups, and there are hopes (surely well founded) that a matching amount of about \$100,000 can be obtained through Wintario. This is just the sort of historic and cultural and tourism-promoting project that Wintario funds should be invested in.

That would still leave about \$100,000 to be raised. And that is where the federal government should come in.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada has already turned down an application for assistance, on the basis that Chiefswood is not of sufficient national historic significance. That was a very questionable decision. Chiefswood is important and significant

in its own right, and for its association with the renowned Pauline Johnson.

Chief Coun. William Montour was not exaggerating when he said Ottawa should help the project because if it were not for Six Nations allegiance to the Crown, Canada as we know it might not exist. There could be no more appropriate place to convey something of that part of Canada's history, and the loyalist tradition, than Chiefswood.

All is not yet lost on the federal front. Derek Blackburn, the MP for Brant, recently wrote to urge that the Chiefswood application be reconsidered, and he plans to repeat the message to Environment Minister Tom McMillan in more detail. So this would be a good time for all the other friends of Chiefswood — the restoration committee, the Six Nations council, Brantford, Brant County, etc., — to add their voices to a renewed campaign for federal assistance.

There should also be renewed contact with David Crombie, the Indian Affairs minister. His department may not have funds for restoration projects, but he is regarded as a friend of the project, and he is not without influence in Ottawa.

Tenders will soon be called to begin the work of restoration before it is too late. This is something of an act of faith and hope that somehow the additional funds will be forthcoming. It would be a disgrace if this work had to be suspended, and a semi-restored mansion left as a mute but eloquent monument to the uncaring and uncharitable attitude of the federal government.