Chateau Lake Louise

Exterior Insulation Saved this Majestic Resort from the Harsh Canadian Winters

Back in 1909, Chateau Lake Louise in Banff, Alberta, was a highly regarded summer resort. Built by the Canadian Pacific Railway in the late 1800’s, the Chateau was ideally situated on a crystal clear lake with an unparalleled view of rugged mountains and glaciers. Despite its isolated location, it accommodated 500 guests in modern splendor with steam heat, electric lights, telephone and telegraph service. All at a cost of $4.00 a day, American plan. Few visitors to the Canadian Rockies did not single out the Chateau as a highlight of their visit. And over the years, this majestic setting became one of the most photographed in North America.

Today the Chateau still plays host to world travelers, only now as a year-round resort. As in the past when the grand old hotel offered the very latest in modern conveniences, today it has taken a quantum leap into the 21st century with a recently completed state-of-the-art retrofit.

Clearly an evolution in hotel lodging, the Chateau grew from a one-story log cabin in 1890, to its present two-winged design. The original west wing was erected in 1911. Walls, floors and roof were constructed of poured-in-place concrete. The 8-story east wing was erected several years later, using a structural steel frame and brick. For 70 years, the two diverse wings en-
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dured the effects of harsh climate, water penetration and freeze/thaw cycles that caused serious deterioration to the mortar, cracks and extensive thermal leakage.

Chateau owner Canadian Pacific Hotels, Ltd., faced with the problem of halting deterioration and a need to update the facade, selected an exterior wall insulation and finish system for its extensive renovation. Work got underway in September of 1984 and was completed on schedule last August.

Largest Canadian Retrofit Yet . . .

Keith Thompson, Chateau Lake Louise Building Superintendent, and Don Migel, Project Manager of Canadian Pacific Hotels, determined it was important to preserve the architectural integrity of the historically significant building while providing a maintenance-free, weather-resistant exterior. “Now that our hotel is occupied year-round, the insulation is going to provide a great deal of comfort to our guests,” noted Thompson.

Thiele Management Services, Ltd., Calgary, Alberta, was the contractor that undertook the project, the largest exterior wall insulation retrofit installation in the Canadian provinces. Working with Dryvit Outsulation System Ltd., Toronto, Ontario, and Glen Smith & Associates, Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta, Dryvit distributor, they were able to overcome the challenges posed by the large renovation. Extensive deterioration of the concrete and masonry walls precluded normal direct bonding of the insulation board to the substrate. The solution was to first sheath the exterior walls with a 3.4 lb. per square yard galvanized expanded metal lath mechanically fastened by 1½ inch Hilti pins. The four component system of insulation board (cut 2 by 4 by 2 inches thick), primus adhesive, mesh and finish coat could then be applied.

When the project was completed in August of 1985, more than 125,000 square feet of exterior insulation had changed the Chateau facade from an incongruous blend of concrete,
masonry and cement plaster to a smooth uniform energy-efficient exterior that could withstand the toughest Canadian winters. With its new high-tech facelift, Chateau Lake Louise prepares to welcome guests to yet another century of its superlative scenery and luxurious accommodations. While the daily rates have certainly multiplied, some say the view is even better now.

(Editor’s note: Chateau Lake Louise ski-weeks start at approximately $570 per person, double occupancy, rising to $815 during the holiday season. Shorter packages are also available. For more information, contact the facility at 403-522-3511.)