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Major Building Renovations Needed At State Capitol

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Reporting [Pat Kessler](#)

ST. PAUL, Minn. (WCCO) — The roof is leaking, and the furnace needs replacing. It's a common lament for thousands of Minnesota homeowners.

But it's happening at Minnesota's biggest house, the State Capitol. At more than a century old, Minnesota's most visible landmark has seen better days.

Several years of patch-up repairs won't work anymore.

That's why there's a plan in the works for a massive overhaul that could actually force everyone to move out and close the Capitol for years.

There's a leaky dome, heavy water damage and pieces of the building are literally falling off.

"Last session we had canopies over the doorways," said Rep. Dean Urdahl, (R) Litchfield. "So that if rocks fell down they wouldn't hit us on the head."

Urdahl is helping lead a massive renovation of the 105 year-old Capitol, which he said is at a tipping point.

"We have leaky roofs, leaky pipes, our beautiful murals and paintings are water-stained. What does that say about us as a state?" he asks.

When it was completed in 1905, Minnesota's Capitol was a classic of modern design. But nowadays, miles of wires are exposed in open ceilings.

The hallways are cramped, there are accessibility problems and fire safety concerns. Even the historic chandelier is down for cleaning and repair.

A high-level Capitol renovation committee is making far reaching plans for the outdated ventilation and heating systems, wiring and plumbing.

It's an extreme makeover that will force the governor and legislature to vacate the building for years.

"It's going to be a major, major disruption," said Mark Dayton, the first-year Democratic governor. "You liken it to maybe an interstate highway project that takes three four five years. It's major disruption and dysfunction."

Built for \$4.5 million, the price tag to build the same State Capitol today would be \$1 billion. The renovation would cost up to \$300 million, staged over 10 years.

Much of the work that is planned is out of public view: Heating and ventilation systems, extensive wiring updates and plumbing.

It would be by far the most extensive renovation in more than a century. The people behind it will say when the renovation is complete it will last for 100 years.

"This is the people's building," said Urdahl. "This is the most important building that the people own in the state of Minnesota. And if we can't maintain the people's building as a symbol of the state, then I think we are in a pretty sad state of affairs."