



Tom Rakocevic
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August 22, 2023

Hon. Michael D. Ford
Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism
56 Wellesley St, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2E7
VIA Email Michael.Ford@pc.ola.org

Hon. Neil Lumsden
Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport
438 University Ave., 6th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3
VIA Email Neil.Lumsden@pc.ola.org

Dear Minister Ford & Minister Lumsden,

I am writing to you with regards to the Marian Shrine of Gratitude located at 3100 Weston Road where people have been gathering for many years to pray and seek a connection with their spirituality.

As of Wednesday, August 16, 2023, worshippers were removed from the property and further public access to the shrine has been restricted. As of Sunday, August 22, 2023, various articles of faith have been removed from the site and many fear that further alterations to the site may be imminent.

The Marian Shrine of Gratitude has been a destination for countless individuals and families as a place of prayer and spiritual growth for many years. Over 15,000 individuals have signed a petition seeking to have this shrine preserved and accessible to members of the public (<https://www.change.org/p/help-save-the-marian-shrine-of-gratitude>).

This shrine is also part of a property that is on the City of Toronto's Heritage List. I have received a letter from Paul Cordingley, Chair of the Etobicoke York Preservation Panel, who supports the designation of the property under the Ontario Heritage Act, also stating that "the proper course of action should be a cessation of alterations and removal of items at the site" until a decision has been rendered. I have attached this letter.

Is your Ministry aware of this urgent situation and is the Ministry contemplating a study to determine this site to be of provincial significance and thereby protected by the Ontario Heritage Act?



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This matter is of great importance to members of my community and far beyond, and I await your response as time is of the utmost importance here. As stated, alterations to this site have been underway and more may be imminent, affecting the cultural and heritage significance of the site before a decision is made.

Sincerely,

Tom Rakocevic
Member of Provincial Parliament
Humber River-Black Creek

CC:

MPP Jill Andrews
Toronto – St. Paul's
Culture & Heritage Critic
Queen's Park, Room 115
Toronto, ON M7A 1A5
VIA Email JAndrew-QP@ndp.on.ca

Michelle Gittens
Assistant Deputy Minister (Acting)
Citizenship, Inclusion and Heritage Division
1075 Bay St. 7th Flr.
Toronto, ON M7A 2E7
VIA Email michelle.gittens@ontario.ca

Etobicoke



York

Community Preservation Panel

August 22 2023

Mr. Tom Rakocevic,
Member of Provincial Parliament,
Humber River - Black Creek

Councillor Anthony Perruzza,
Councillor - Ward 7
Toronto City Council

Gentlemen:

I am writing you as Chair of the Etobicoke York Community Preservation Panel (EYCPP), with respect to recent developments concerning 3100 Weston Road.

The EYCPP is a panel of volunteers mandated by the City of Toronto pursuant to the Ontario Heritage Act. We act as a point of contact for the Community, with a mandate to advise Community and City Council, with respect to heritage matters.

Our Panel has a detailed understanding of the background of the 3100 Weston Road property and has engaged with the community with respect to the potential sale and repurposing of this property. There is considerable interest among members of the community considering the historical importance of this property, the Rivermede House, and the Marian Shrine of Gratitude.

We wish to advise you as follows:

1) We understand that items of potential relevance to the heritage attributes of the site, and of great relevance to the community, have recently been removed from the site. It is critical that these elements are conserved and have appropriate custodianship. The

most critical need at this time is to confirm what items have been removed, and confirm that they are being properly stored and safeguarded pending further decisions - and by whom.

2) There are requirements imposed by the Ontario Heritage Act with respect to demolition of the property given that it is listed on the City's Heritage Register. The enforcement of this process rests with the City and we trust that they will be respected by the owner.

3) It is reasonable to assume that the owners of the property intend to develop the property in some way, potentially placing the existing structure and the surrounding grounds at risk.

The EYCPP strongly supports the quick designation of the property under the Ontario Heritage Act. This will protect the existing structure and any related heritage attributes.

The merits of designation have been researched by community members. We believe they are compelling. The heritage designation process requires a review of the potential designation by City staff. Should staff consider it appropriate, they may recommend to Council to designate the property under the Heritage Act. We trust that City staff will be able to review the issue and provide their recommendations promptly, and that this matter can be placed before City Council with sufficient priority. We look to the owners of the property to respect this process. The Heritage Act provides for property owners to agree to extension of statutory timelines to enable this.

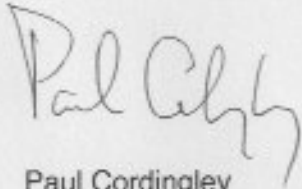
What is critical is that no precipitate action be taken that places the existing structure, including the exterior space (which has to date been enjoyed by the community as a place of spiritual significance and reflection), and all related heritage and spiritual attributes, at risk pending a full review of the merits of the heritage value of the property. Disposition of the heritage review should then inform any development application through the usual process.

As of this writing we do not see a development application registered on the City's Application Center web portal. These applications require time to prepare and process. There is no pressing need to alter the property or remove potentially significant items given the likely timeline to review and resolve the future for the property.

For this reason, we believe that the proper course of action should be a cessation of alterations and removal of items at the site. Given the broad access to the site which the public has enjoyed to date, we believe this access should be restored until these issues are resolved.

On behalf of the EYCPP, I am asking you to take all possible action to communicate with the owners of the property and to influence them to cease any further action at site, pending a heritage review and appropriate review of any development proposal with proper public consultation, and to again allow the public to access whatever elements of the Shrine are still in place.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Paul Cordingley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P".

Paul Cordingley
Chair
Etobicoke York Community Preservation Panel