

January 17, 2017

Oral Presentation to
Chair and Members Hamilton Planning Committee
Demolitions and Redevelopment King Street Gore Park



Thank you for agreeing to hear our deputation.

This is the second time I have stood here as President of Architectural Conservancy Ontario. The last time was in 2006 during a previous term as president. Then I was arguing against the demolition of the Lister Block, a provincially significant building that had fallen into a terrible state of disrepair. At the time there was lots of expert opinion that the building couldn't be saved, as well as many voices arguing it could. The din was deafening. ACO asked the Minister of Culture, then Caroline Di Cocco, to use her powers under the Ontario Heritage Act to prevent demolition. She could have done that, but instead chose to convene an extraordinarily successful process that brought many people to the table to find a better solution.

Fast forward to the spring of 2013. The Mayor of Hamilton, Bob Bratina, and ACO co-hosted a celebratory event at the miraculously restored Lister Block, which included a toast to Ms. Di Cocco. In attendance were MPP Ted McMeekin, members of ACO's President's Circle including former Toronto mayor John Sewell, lawyer Jane Pepino, historian Mark Osbaldeston, ACO President Susan Ratcliffe, Hamilton's tireless heritage advocates were represented by Diane Dent and Grant Head. We also had representatives of the Ontario Heritage Trust and the Ontario Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport. Lots of nice things were said. Caroline Di Cocco was particularly gracious in saying

"I'm grateful for the army of activists. . . the activists took the responsibility to be diligent and to help me understand what the building meant to the city of Hamilton."

Caroline Di Cocco April 5, 2013,

What might have been a tragedy for Hamilton and Ontario's heritage was averted through provincial intervention and creative thinking on the parts of so many people, the property owners included, who had pretty much given up on being able to save anything. At this juncture, ACO has written to the Minister Eleanor McMahon advising that if Hamilton votes to permit further demolitions, we will be asking her to issue an immediate stop order to prevent the losses. ACO hopes it will not come to that. What would be preferable would be for the Mayor and Council of Hamilton to join ACO in asking for provincial support to find a solution, one that would permit development in the core without sacrificing so much significant fabric in Hamilton's most important civic space. The project before you could be much improved. Hamilton's most historic civic space

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deserves better. It is time to hit the pause button.

ACO has been following the development projects and demolition proposals along Gore Park since late 2012 when President Susan Ratcliffe wrote to the Minister to prevent demolitions of the buildings on the south side of the Gore. Hamilton City Council wisely decided to designate. Since the investment in the Lister Block, Hamilton has attracted a lot of small investors drawn to the incremental artist and entrepreneur driven regeneration of your great downtown. What has been most gratifying for ACO, is that our voice for saving the Gore has been augmented by the many investors who had been buying up small properties in the core, restoring them and starting businesses, a movement that accelerates every day.

The properties around the Gore should be the crown jewels in this regeneration process, but regrettably, because this significant row of buildings has been assembled by an owner who sees the heritage properties as a liability not an opportunity, there is demolition by neglect instead of revitalization. While the municipality cannot prevent such assemblies, planning can establish rules that restrict the size of replacement buildings. Such rules have been in place in Ottawa's Byward Market since 1990, part of a very interesting Heritage Conservation District. Byward Market, once a derelict area once slated for coarse large scale urban renewal, has been regenerated to be an area that is a great attraction for Ottawa's citizens and tourists alike. Finding ways to encourage fine grained regeneration will give Hamilton a resilient new economy.

In the mid 1990's, at the request of the Mayor and Council of the City of Toronto the Provincial Facilitator came to assist in sorting out a tangled development mess around Fort York. Part of the solution was a land exchange that allowed the developers to develop without encroachment on the significant heritage assets of the Fort. Provincial facilitation took the situation from "better than nothing" to a win-win.

ACO is asking Hamilton to refuse further demolitions in the Gore, to hit the pause button and consider asking for provincial assistance through the Minister of Culture Tourism and Sport.

Yours sincerely,



Catherine Nasmith, President,
OAA FRAIC CAHP

c.c

Barbara Murray, Chair ACO Hamilton Region
The Honourable Eleanor McMahon, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Sport