

## **OBJECTION TO HERITAGE DESIGNATION, 84 YORK BLVD, HAMILTON**

I write to object to the proposed designation of 84 York Blvd as a property of cultural heritage and to request that designation be reconsidered and revoked by council.

While the buildings at 84 York Blvd meet some of the criteria for designation as a heritage property, having specific styles of architecture designed by a prominent Hamilton architect, the importance of other criteria is overstated in the staff report. The association with the Christian Workers' Movement and Peter Philpott is respected and is well documented in our archives, but the building itself does not demonstrate that history, nor does it define or maintain the character of the area, nor is it linked to its surroundings physically, functionally or visually. The building is seen as a landmark because of its size, not because of its function; the appearance suggests a bank or offices rather than a church.

**The most appropriate way to memorialize Peter Philpott and our history is by continuing and expanding the work he commenced 130 years ago, not by preserving a seriously deteriorated building.** Our vigorous and growing congregation requires a newer and larger facility. We are currently in the midst of a relocation project redeveloping and extending an existing downtown building at 160 King St E, where our multiple ministries can grow and flourish.

The buildings at 84 York Blvd were thoroughly examined by MHBC Planning and building experts. Their report states: "Due to the condition of the building and conclusion of the technical studies, retention of the building and integration with the proposed development is not a feasible option". Their report follows three previous building assessments obtained by the church in 2011, 2014 and 2021.

### **Implications for Philpott church:**

In 2011, the congregation initiated actions to either rebuild on site or relocate, while maintaining our commitment to remain in the downtown core. Rebuilding on site proved financially problematic, and in 2021 we took the opportunity provided by the city's rezoning of this area for high rise development to sell the property and plan for relocation to a new facility. We are renovating the former Lincoln Alexander Centre (built originally as an Odeon theatre) at 160 King St East, and by adding a new building on the adjacent land (164 and 168 King St E) will have a facility much more suited to today's diverse needs. We anticipate continuing as a strong faith community serving the greater Hamilton community and especially the downtown core for decades to come. This facility will not only have a completely new 500 seat worship space but also has retained one of the original 350 seat theatres, making this complex a valuable asset to the city of Hamilton.

The sale of 84 York Blvd. to the developer was negotiated and signed in 2021 but has not yet closed. The proposed designation of 84 York Blvd has caused the developer to challenge the conditions of sale and to devalue the property if designation is confirmed. This threatens the financial viability of our proposed relocation. Furthermore, if development does not proceed, the congregation could be left holding a designated building. The legacy of Peter Philpott would then likely be a dwindling congregation struggling with an inadequate and aging building, seriously impacting the ability to continue the work begun over a century ago.

The buildings erected in 1901 and 1906 were designed for the needs of the church of that day. Churches today need facilities not only for worship and preaching, but for many other ministries not envisaged in 1906. The physical limitations of our current facility have significantly hampered essential aspects of the church's effectiveness. We were delighted to acquire new space in downtown Hamilton, but our plan to relocate to this improved facility is now seriously threatened by the heritage designation of our existing building.

**Implications for the city:**

Retaining the existing church building will also inhibit the necessary renewal of a vital part of the central city. York Blvd is a major thoroughfare into the city, and the much anticipated renovation of the arena will certainly enhance this area. Maintaining 84 York Blvd, with its fake stone façade covering up the seriously deteriorating brick, will limit redevelopment of the north side of the boulevard. It will also preclude a substantial part if not all of a proposed development which would contribute greatly needed additional housing in the downtown core.

**I urge council to deny the proposal to designate 84 York Blvd.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sears", written in a cursive style.

Malcolm Sears,  
Chair, Building Committee, Philpott Church

May 6, 2024