

# TORONTO STAFF REPORT

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March 23, 2004

To: Toronto South Community Council

From: Director, Community Planning, South District

Subject: Request for approval of a variance from Chapter 297, Signs, of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code, for one flush-mounted third party fascia sign at 125 George Street  
Application No. 903019  
Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Ward 28

Purpose:

To review and make recommendations on a request by Thomas Scoon with 614115 Ontario Ltd. on behalf of 125 George St. Holdings Inc., for approval of a variance from Chapter 297, Signs, of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code, to permit one fascia sign for the purpose of third-party advertising at the above noted location.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Recommendations:

- (1) It is recommended that the requested variance be approved subject to the following conditions:
  - (a) that the owner will remove the existing third party advertising sign within 90 days of the date of the decision of this Community Council meeting;
  - (b) that, in place of the existing sign, approval of new replacement third party advertising sign be granted for the remaining period of the



sign contract for the building, which expires on April 1, 2010;

- (c) that the location and placement of the new replacement third party advertising sign be limited to an area of the east façade of the building between the lower horizontal course of the third floor and the upper horizontal course of the fourth floor and between the vertical course defining the northeast corner of the building and the two upper storey windows closest to this corner;
  - (d) that the new replacement third party advertising sign not exceed 6.71 metres in height and 2.29 metres in width and not occupy a surface area exceeding 15.4 square metres;
  - (e) that the framing and fastening systems of the new replacement third party advertising sign be designed to adequately support its load; and
- (2) the applicant be advised, upon approval of the variance, of the requirements to obtain the necessary sign permits from the Commissioner of Urban Development Services.

Background:

The subject property is located at the northeast corner of George Street and Richmond Street East in a RA (reinvestment area) zone and houses a four-storey commercial building. The applicant is seeking permission to maintain an existing non-illuminated fascia sign used for third party advertising purposes. The sign is rectangular-shaped, is 7.6 metres high and 2.4 metres wide, and has an approximate surface area of 19 square metres. It is mounted flush with, and oriented vertically on, the exterior wall at the second, third, and fourth floor level of the northeast corner of the building and faces Richmond Street East.

Comments:

The sign does not comply with Chapter 297, Signs, of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code in the in the following way:

Sign By-law Section And Requirements	Applicant's Proposal	Required Variance
(1) 297-10F(1)	To permit a fascia sign on the northeast corner of the subject building for the purposes of third party advertising.	A third party advertising sign is prohibited unless it is separated by a minimum radius of sixty (60) metres from any other such sign used for the purposes of third party advertising.

The provisions of Chapter 297 of the Municipal Code are designed to limit the location, placement and size of third party signage throughout the city. The intent of these controls is to minimize visual clutter on the streetscape and to protect views and heritage buildings from the negative impacts of signage.

Third party advertising signs are required to meet certain separation distances from other such signs. In this case, the applicant's sign is located approximately 21 metres from a sign used for third party advertising purposes at 129 George Street, which is located on the north side of Richmond Street East and directly opposite the north face of the subject building. As this property falls within 60 metres of the subject property, this separation distance is not met.

#### Existing Sign and Issue of Non-Compliance:

In March, 2000 the previous owners of the building, 614115 Ontario Limited, now the applicant, signed a ten year lease with a sign company to erect a sign on the northeast corner of the building. In April, 2000 a permit was issued by the City permitting the sign. In June, 2002 the building was purchased by a new company, 125 George Street Holdings Inc., who assumed as part of the purchase all leases and the 10-year sign contract with the expectation that the sign permit was legal.

On October 1, 2002, the applicant received an order of non-compliance from the City noting that the frame and fasteners of the existing sign were not in accordance with permit plans and that the sign was located in close proximity to another third party advertising sign, triggering a variance to the Sign By-law. In April, 2003, the applicant submitted an application to obtain approval of this separation distance variance, which would maintain the existing sign on the building.

#### Analysis:

The building at 125 George Street is located within the King-Parliament Reinvestment Area, which is characterized by historic and new mixed-use buildings and is experiencing considerable redevelopment. Council adopted By-law 1997-0483, a Community Improvement Plan for the King-Parliament area, which promotes street and façade improvements to reinforce the historic value of the district and to revitalize and enhance local streetscapes.

Planning staff conducted a site visit to the building and evaluated the impacts of the existing third party advertising sign within its context in the King Parliament area. The proximity of the existing sign to a third party sign at 129 George Street adds visual clutter to this portion of Richmond Street East and detracts from a significant view terminus as the street realigns at Jarvis Street. In addition, the sign's placement on the subject building and its shape obscures the rhythm established by the building's horizontal courses and windows and further detracts from the character and quality of the local streetscape. Given these visual impacts, staff consider the location, placement and size of the existing sign to be contrary to the planning policy direction of the King-Parliament area.

However, in recognition of the unique circumstances underlying the submission of this application and, in place of a recommendation to refuse the existing third party advertising sign, Planning staff met with the applicant and owner of the building to discuss the option of maintaining signage on the building. After several discussions, Planning staff advised the applicant to consider an option of removing the existing sign and replacing it with a new appropriately scaled sign for the duration of the sign contract, which expires on April 1, 2010.

This proposed replacement third party advertising sign, approximately 6.71 metres high and 2.29 metres wide with a surface area of 15.4 square metres, will be smaller than the existing 19 square metre sign and placed higher on the eastern face of the building. The new location and positioning of the replacement sign will be between the inside edge of the lower horizontal course of the third floor and the inside edge of the upper horizontal course of the fourth floor and between the two upper floor windows closest to the northeast corner and the vertical course that delineates this corner of the building. At this higher location the smaller replacement sign will integrate better with the rhythm established by courses and windows on the east façade of the building and will improve its relationship to adjacent buildings and the local streetscape.

**Recommendations:**

Accordingly, Planning staff recommend that the existing third party sign be removed and replaced with a new third party advertising sign that is smaller in size, relocated to the upper floors of the building, and positioned to improve its integration with the eastern façade of the building. The replacement third party advertising sign should be approved only for the duration of the sign contract, which expires April 1, 2010.

**Conclusions:**

It is recommended that the request for variance to permit one flush mounted fascia sign for third party advertising purposes be approved subject to the conditions outlined in this report.

**Contact:**

Dan Tovey, Assistant Planner, East Section  
Telephone: 416-392-7574  
Fax: 416-392-1330  
E-mail: dtovey@toronto.ca

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Ted Tyndorf  
Director, Community Planning, South District

Applicant's Information:

Thomas Scoon 614115 Ontario Ltd.  
40 Scollard St., Suite 200  
Telephone: 416-907-7449  
Fax: 416-907-7448

List of Attachments:

Attachment 1: Photographic Elevation – Existing Third Party Advertising Sign

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**Elevation**

**125 George Street**

Applicant's Submitted Drawing

Not to Scale  
12/03/03

File # 903019

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