

Monday August 15, 2010

Additional Item for North York Community Council
Notice of Motion

From: Howard Moscoe

Re: Designation of Places of Worship as Heritage Sites

To: The Chair and Members of the North York Community Council

Places of worship have longevity. For the most part after they are initially established they remain as places of worship for extended periods of time. The communities around them grow and change more rapidly than do these institutions. Consequently they tend to be the most likely buildings to be awarded heritage designations.

Heritage designation as it is practiced in Toronto is largely haphazard and reactive. There is no comprehensive plan for the preservation of church properties. Usually a church will go unnoticed by heritage Toronto until such time as an application for a re-zoning is filed.

At that time Heritage Toronto swoops in and demands that the properties be designated. This process is unfair and burdensome. It needs to be changed and should be made pro-active rather than reactive. Congregations have a right to know and understand their status so they can do some forward planning. Heritage designation can be accomplished through a collaborative process instead of the confrontational process that it is today.

Recommendations:

1. The planning department in collaboration with Heritage Toronto undertake a comprehensive audit of all places of worship within the city of Toronto.
2. This audit be based on a dialogue with the faith community.
3. Faith groups be asked to list all places of worship within their denomination and work with the planning department and Heritage Toronto to determine which buildings merit designation and in what order of priority.
4. Once that list is established it can become a planning framework for both the City and the religious denominations themselves. That can better assist in the preservation of important heritage structures than the present system