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March 27, 2013

Councillor Vincent Crisanti, Chair  
and Members of Etobicoke-York Community Council  
Etobicoke Civic Center  
Main Floor, 399 The West Mall  
Toronto (Ontario) M9C 2Y2

Subject: Lake Shore Boulevard West and Douglas Boulevard (Mimico Estates) – Intention to Designate under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

Dear Councillor Crisanti,

This letter is in support of the Toronto Preservation Board's recommendation to designate the Myrtle Villa estate buildings and landscaping features under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Originally built by Albert Benjamin Ormsby and named the Mimico Estates, this site was purchased in 1925 by Mr. James Franceschini and renamed Myrtle Villa.

As you know, Mr. Franceschini occupies a unique place in Canadian history and it is for this reason that I believe that Myrtle Villa should be protected under the Ontario Heritage Act in addition to the intrinsic value of protecting unique architectural treasures throughout Canada.

Mr. Franceschini's story is both heart-wrenching and inspiring in that it is the story of thousands of Italian-Canadians from a bygone era. When Mr. Franceschini arrived in Canada in 1906 at 15 years of age, he spoke no English and was penniless. He found a job and earned enough money to begin his own small excavation company. He eventually grew his business and became tremendously successful. When Canada went to war, Mr. Franceschini established the Dufferin Shipbuilding Company to build minesweepers for the government at what is believed to be the lowest cost in Canada and then the unthinkable happened, Italy declared war on Canada.

Though Mr. Franceschini contributed to the war effort and never gave reasons to believe that his sympathies lied elsewhere it didn't seem to matter because when Italy declared war on Canada, James Franceschini was arrested, consigned to an internment camp as an enemy alien and his business was confiscated by the government.

It is understandable that the government of the day was shaken by the war but it did not provide an adequate justification of the persecution that James Franceschini and others like him suffered. After the war, Mr. Franceschini continued to be a model citizen who contributed tremendously to his community in spite of the year he spent in an internment camp.

This contribution to Canada and steadfast loyalty is something thousands of internees demonstrated but as the years pass, there are fewer and fewer reminders of what it meant to be an Italian-Canadian in Mr. Franceschini's time which is why I think that Mr. Franceschini's memory must be preserved by designating the Myrtle Villa estate buildings and landscaping features under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Best regards,

Massimo Pacetti, FCGA  
Member of Parliament for Saint-Léonard / Saint-Michel