

**City of Toronto  
2015 Budget**

**Written Submission to the  
Budget Subcommittee**

**by**

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Chair**

**Etobicoke-York Community Preservation Panel**

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I am the Chair of the Etobicoke-York Community Preservation Panel. The four Community Preservation Panels, one for each of the Community Council areas, are established by City Council with the mandate to identify and work to protect the cultural and built heritage in their districts.

The four panels wish collectively to express the case for investment in preservation of built heritage resources, our support for the enhancements that were approved in the 2014 City Planning Budget and now reflected in the 2015 Budget, and our support for additional measures to enhance heritage in our city.

Preservation of Toronto's heritage is vitally important to Toronto's economy, culture and spirit. Heritage preservation and conservation increases employment (especially for skilled workers), encourages the development of a diverse and vibrant city with character, and supports environmental sustainability and the conservation of our material resources.

The outrage over the recent loss of the Stollery's store (Yonge and Bloor), and several similar situations in recent years, like the Empress Hotel (Yonge and Gould) and the Mimico Fire Hall and Police Station (13 Superior Avenue), reflects the love and concern of Torontonians for their city and its built heritage. In addition, though less recognized, there is a continuing erosion of our distinctive streetscapes in neighbourhoods such as Long Branch, Leaside, Lawrence Park and Don Mills. The loss of our heritage through demolition, whether with replacement buildings being approved (residential uses), or without replacement buildings being approved (commercial and institutional uses), or by fire (whether by wilful action, neglect or otherwise) is a continuing concern.

The existing stock of heritage properties currently consists of more than 8,000 structures, including those that are officially designated as such, and others listed as architecturally or historically significant.

Currently the process of identifying properties to be listed is essentially reactive and there is reportedly a backlog of hundreds of properties to be investigated and processed. This is not a new condition – there has been backlog for many years now. Very few properties are added to the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties annually. For example, the Etobicoke-York Community Preservation Panel has nominated 11 properties for listing or designation in the past five years, but only two (in Mimico and Thistletown) have been processed and those two only because of immediate threats to those properties. The North York Community Preservation Panel has submitted nominations for 24 properties in the past seven years, but only one (in Lawrence Park) has been acted on. This clear and troubling shortfall in heritage staffing is not addressed in the 2015 budget despite an urgent need that the situation be rectified.

City Heritage Grants and the Heritage Tax Rebate Program assist the owners of designated properties to repair and renovate structures that otherwise would be at risk. The preservation of heritage properties is often more expensive than for more modern structures and these small grants have leveraged numerous restoration and maintenance projects for heritage properties in the city that might not have otherwise been undertaken, and for a small cost per project.

The restructuring of these two programs, including the elimination of the heritage tax rebate program for residential properties, was approved by Council last summer with minimal discussion or public consultation. The public at large and, in particular, those who are immediately affected, were not directly notified that there was a proposal to terminate that rebate program, nor were they afforded any opportunity to be heard. Such decisions should be taken only after making an effort to hear from the public.

This brings us to the 2015 Budget for Heritage Preservation Services. The 2015 Operating Budget - Staff Recommended New and Enhanced Services for City Planning indicates that "Council (in 2014) approved the initiation of three new Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Studies/Plans be added to the Program's work plan... to be started as the 3 HCD studies/plans currently forecast for completion are concluding, and build the base capacity to initiate and complete 5 HCD studies/plans per year, beginning in 2015".

This is a long overdue infusion of resources for heritage conservation district planning that will serve to protect many of the City's neighbourhoods of character. It also recognizes HCD planning as a legitimate city planning process, instead of a volunteer-based, bake-sale funded process. However we note that HPS has not been budgeted the additional resources required to permit it to properly manage the resulting HCDs. Changes to designated properties are subject to review and approval by heritage staff.

We are pleased that the additional positions for HCD planning that were approved in 2014, and the vacancies that have been unfilled for several months, are now filled. Increasingly the important and unique role of Heritage in building a vibrant and colourful city is being recognized. As such it is high time that Heritage Preservation Services become a Branch in City Planning, instead of just being just a section.

Denise Harris  
Chair, Etobicoke/York Community Preservation Panel

