

From: [Chris Robinson](#)
To: [Toronto East York Community Council](#)
Subject: My comments for 2022.TE34.15 on June 29, 2022 Toronto and East York Community Council
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Attachments: [Speaker Chris Presentation to TEYCC 29 June 2022.pdf](#)

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the June 29, 2022 Toronto and East York Community Council meeting on item 2022.TE34.15, Alterations to a Heritage Property and Authority to Enter into a Heritage Easement Agreement - 95 St. Joseph Street

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments: Please see attached PDF

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For the attention of the Chair and Members of the Toronto East York Community Council

Chris Robinson Submission to the TEYCC June 29, 2022. Agenda Item PB34.15

Good morning. I am Chris Robinson, a member of the 95 Action Group, a community group that has been engaged for over three years with the City and the Developer about this development proposal for the Basilian Seminary at 95 St Joseph Street. Thank you for this opportunity to address this Council meeting briefly on this **site of national importance**.

I am sure that you are aware that you are being asked to vote on whether to accept a developer's proposal to demolish the Basilian Seminary, retaining only the facade and one of the chapels, and replace it with a 39-storey mixed-use condo tower.

Here are the facts and a timeline.

Ernest Cormier's Basilian Seminary is one of Canada's most lauded architect's most highly esteemed creations, built at the height of his powers, and one of only three in Toronto and indeed, in all Ontario.

Ernest Cormier's work is respected globally. One of Canada's most respected experts in the field, Phyllis Lambert from the Canadian Centre for Architecture, has written to the Heritage Board no less than four times that the architectural heritage should be fully protected in all its elements.

In 2018, prior to the development application, the Seminary was proposed for Part IV protection which was approved by this Council in February this year. **And yet, five months later**, the developer is asking your permission to demolish it.

In 2019, the City Planners on the file comprehensively detailed the many reasons why City Planning did not support the development, including objections to height, massing and use. **And yet, a year later**, the developer's revised application reiterated its request to demolish the Seminary.

In January this year, the 79-page City Heritage Planning Report for Action provided a detailed rationale in support of the preservation of all components on the site, including the entire form of the E-shaped main building, both chapels, and its contextuality to the St Michael's College campus, which is *"Distinguished by its collection of low-rise college buildings...set in a series of open, landscaped spaces"*.

At the City Heritage Board meeting considering this report, the Chair Sandra Shaul, observed that community support for preserving the site had generated *"the most number of letters I have ever seen in my history with the Board"*. The Board unanimously voted in favour of Part IV protection. **And yet, a month later**, the developer posted their heritage plan reiterating their request to demolish the Seminary, and a City Heritage Alterations Report was submitted supporting this request.

Earlier this month, the City Heritage Board considered this Alterations Report supporting the developer's request to demolish the Seminary. The expert board members decided **not to accept** the Alterations Report, arguing that it did not respect the architectural significance, the cultural importance, or the contextual integrity of the site.

Those are the facts to date. **The experts have spoken**, often eloquently and in detail, as to why Cormier's Basilian Seminary should be protected for future generations of Torontonians. **Today** is the day when the issue will be decided.

Your vote will decide whether the "distinct cultural heritage landscape" of St Michael's College Campus and Queen's Park, the site of Toronto's Catholic history and heritage dating back in unbroken continuity over 170 years is to be preserved...or knocked down for another condo tower.

This is a Toronto-wide decision, not a local one. Please consider this bigger picture. And **please - vote to require the developer to go back and reconsider their plans so that Cormier's legacy can be fully preserved**. Thank you.

Chris Robinson, 62 Wellesley St W, #1706, Toronto ON M5S2X3