



September 5, 2023

Re: NY7.7 -123 Wynford Drive -Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment Application Appeal Report

Dear members of the North York Community Council

I hope this letter finds you well. I write on behalf of the Toronto Chapter of the National Association of Japanese Canadians (the Toronto NAJC) to strongly support the Recommendation contained in the Appeal Report to **oppose** the current application at the Provincial Appeal Body, the Ontario Land Tribunal. We urge the North York Community Council and the City of Toronto to hold any development accountable to creating a design, which protects the building's unique and significant cultural, historical and architectural value.

The site at 123 Wynford Drive holds the former Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC) – a building of extreme significance to the Japanese Canadian community. We are deeply concerned about this project, which threatens to effectively destroy the unique heritage building by smothering and obscuring the original low-rise structure with 48-storey and 55-storey condos.

Several members of our organization and the Japanese Canadian community at large, attended a public consultation session via Zoom with the developer on February 21, 2023. That meeting revealed an absence of knowledge of Japanese Canadian history in Canada, and also reflected the ongoing exclusion and erasure of community histories outside of the mainstream.

We note, for example, that the Heritage Impact Assessment (“**HIA**”) submitted by ERA Architects Inc. (“**ERA**”) in support of the Application was completed without any community consultation, including without consultation with members of the Japanese Canadian community.

In the circumstances, we are particularly concerned with the statement in the HIA that “[h]istorical research does not indicate that the property yields or has the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.” The JCCC yields information that contributes not only to an understanding of the internment of Japanese Canadians and its effect on the evolution of the Japanese Canadian community, as well as Japanese Canadian culture itself, but also to the history of the City of Toronto and Canada.

From 1942 to 1949 Japanese Canadians were forcibly uprooted, exiled, dispossessed, subject to forced labour and family separation. After they were released from this unjust incarceration, the federal government began to offer internees the choice of deportation to Japan or relocation east of the Rocky Mountains. During this period after the Second World War, Japanese Canadians had to start again with nothing. Everything had been stolen by the Canadian government and the community was discouraged from congregating and indeed banned from settling in Toronto for several years.

Nonetheless, less than 20 years after the end of the Second World War, the Japanese Canadian community came together to build the JCCC. To make the building a reality, 75 community members committed to a mortgage to finance the building. These individuals put second mortgages on their homes and businesses to fund the JCCC. As well, Japanese Canadians across Canada donated whatever they could afford to celebrate the



Japanese Canadian community's ancestry and culture, regain a sense of self-respect and promote friendship with all Canadians through culture. The design and materials chosen for the structure similarly tell the story of Japanese Canadians, building their community home with what they could.

In this vein, the JCCC was also a gift to the cultural mosaic of Canada, and a commitment and contribution to multiculturalism and diversity in Toronto. Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson was the first prime minister to acknowledge the Japanese Canadian interment had been wrong, which was an important milestone and step toward Canada's recognition of the injustice of internment. At the official opening of the JCCC in 1964, Pearson stood at the podium before hundreds of spectators and stated:

“For me, this centre is a reminder of the multi-racial heritage on which our nation is being built, surely and strongly. It is a new living monument to the fact that our Canadian purpose which seeks a Canadian identity, need not and does not mean a loss of the traditions and cultures, the arts and skills brought to Canada from other lands . . . action taken by the Canadian government, though taken under the strains and fears and pressures of War – was a black mark against Canada's traditional fairness and devotion to the principles of human rights. . . I hope that the Centre will serve as a reminder to future generations of Japanese Canadians that theirs is an abundant heritage and a proud tradition.”

The JCCC is a significant heritage property, which tells important stories about the forces and events that have shaped the Japanese Canadian community, the city of Toronto and Canada. It is also part of an important cultural corridor, which includes the site of the current Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, the Aga Khan Museum, the Aga Khan Park, the Toronto Ismaili Centre and the Ontario Science Centre, which was also designed by Raymond Moriyama.

Unfortunately, the proposed development does not sufficiently protect its value. The Heritage Planning department recently released a very thoughtful and thorough report dated May 31, 2023, on the historical, cultural and architectural significance of 123 Wynford Drive. City Council at its meeting of July 19, 2023, stated its intention to designate the property at 123 Wynford Drive under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The Toronto NAJC has received Party Status at the Appeal and will seek to provide a voice to the Japanese Canadian community at the appeal regarding the deep significance of the building to the Japanese Canadian community. We implore the North York Community Council and the City to protect the site by opposing the current application.

Respectfully submitted,



Lynn Deutscher Kobayashi, President

*The NAJC negotiated the 1988 historic redress agreement and apology announced by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. The \$430 million redress agreement was the largest human rights settlement in Canada at that time.*