

From: [Lynn Deutscher Kobayashi](#)
To: [Planning and Housing](#)
Cc: [Les Takahashi](#); [Lynn Deutscher Kobayashi](#)
Subject: [External Sender] Request to speak July 5, 2023 - 123 Wynford the Original Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre
Date: June 28, 2023 3:42:34 PM
Attachments: [Agenda Item History - 2023.PH5.10.pdf](#)
[Toronto NAJC Letter to - Housing and Planning - Toronto City Council - North York City Council.pdf](#)

Good morning/afternoon,

I hope this email finds you well. In addition to this request to speak, please find enclosed a letter on behalf of the Greater Toronto Chapter, National Association of Japanese Canadians (Toronto NAJC) with respect to 123 Wynford Drive, which holds the former Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC).

The original JCCC is a building of extreme significance to the Japanese Canadian community. We implore the city to protect the site by designating it under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Toronto Preservation Board has issued a notice of intention to designate the site, which will be considered by the Planning and Housing Committee on July 5, 2023 and by City Council on July 19, 2023, subject to the actions of the Planning and Housing Committee. The Heritage department report is attached.

Sincerely,

Lynn Deutscher Kobayashi (she/her)
President

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With respect and gratitude for Indigenous peoples the traditional stewards of the lands and waters where we work and play.

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June 27, 2023

Re: 123 Wynford Drive – the original Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre

To the Office of the Mayor, members of the Housing and Planning committee, North York community council and all members of council,

I hope this letter finds you well. I write with respect to the proposed development at 123 Wynford Drive in Don Mills on behalf of the Greater Toronto Chapter, National Association of Japanese Canadians (Toronto NAJC).

This site on 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 value of the building. 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 are particularly concerned with the Heritage Impact Assessment and Statement submitted by ERA Architects Inc. (**ERA**), who was retained by the developer, which states that “historical research does not indicate that the property yields or has the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of a community or a culture.”

We therefore write to ask for your support in protecting 123 Wynford Drive and holding any development accountable to creating a design, which protects the building’s unique and significant cultural, historical and architectural value. We also request the opportunity to consult regarding the significance of the building to the Japanese Canadian community.

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.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF JAPANESE CANADIANS
GREATER TORONTO CHAPTER

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. The report recommends that city council state its intention to designate the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value. In our view, the Heritage Designation Report more accurately and comprehensively addresses the heritage value of the JCCC than the Heritage Impact Assessment conducted by ERA. As such, we respectfully request that the Toronto Preservation Board prefer the findings in the Heritage Designation Report.

We understand that designation of 123 Wynford Drive will be on the agenda at the July 5, 2023, Planning and Housing committee meeting and the July 19, 2023, city council meeting. We implore the city to protect the site by designating it under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

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.