

**November 27, 2023**

**Planning & Housing Committee  
Toronto City Hall  
100 Queen Street West,  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5H 2N2**

My name is Toni Varone, and through Montecassino Inc., I am the owner of the property known as the **Montecassino Hotel** located at Sheppard Avenue and Chesswood Drive. My family acquired this land in 1972 and was among the first developments in the Tudor Chesswood Business Park. For 50 years, we have operated a Hotel and Banquet Hall on this site. Montecassino has been a part of this community since the inception of this land parcel. Like many other companies in the area, we have contributed to the fabric of this community for the past half-century.

In the 2006 Official Plan, my property was designated as an Employment Area. Under the North York Zoning By-law 7625, hotels and banquet halls were permitted uses. In mid-2013, the City adopted the Harmonized Zoning By-law 569-2013, along with Official Plan Amendment 231. These changes designated my property as a General Employment Area, with hotels and banquet halls once again being permitted uses.

In August 2020, I applied for a conversion to mixed-use, which I did in good faith. Recognizing that the current building and structure of Montecassino has reached the end of its useful life expectancy, I wanted to leave a legacy of continued service to the community. Therefore, I proposed a 100% affordable rental housing project that would have provided dignity and respect to those in need within our community. The conversion application was not successful and the reality of upgrading and renewing our building as a Hotel and Banquet Hall is now unavoidable.

Montecassino continues to be a significant employer as a Hotel and Banquet Hall. The implementation of OPA 668 and now OPA 680, with the elimination of legally established uses, such as the banquet hall and hotel, will have the opposite of the intended effect and diminish the employment opportunities on this land.

It is my understanding that OPA 668 has not been adopted by Council but was passed previously by the Planning and Housing Committee and would recognize existing uses as “legally conforming” yet OPA 680 would then remove them from being permitted going forward so if I decided to rebuild my hotel or banquet hall given its place in its life cycle, I would not be permitted to do so at least as of right. OPA 680 and the elimination of our existing zoning rights and replacing the “**as of right use**” with a “**legal non-conforming use**” presents significant challenges in our pursuit to upgrade and renew our facility.

My understanding was this was not the intended outcome from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Their intent was not to remove uses on properties but have shopping centres, office parks and other “non-primary employment” uses redesignated to mixed use or another designation which did not constitute an “**Area of Employment**”. City staff have misconstrued this intent to achieve an agenda not intended by OPA 668 and OPA 680.

While I understand the importance of industry for the economy, eliminating legitimate existing employment uses such as retail, office, hotels, banquet halls, fitness centres, or arenas, from this community is unjust, ill-advised, mean-spirited and counterproductive. The community and the business owners I have spoken to are opposed to such actions, as is the local BIA. We, as employment generators in this community, are concerned as to why this council seeks to undermine valid employment uses. I question the wisdom of such a change. In conclusion I respectfully request that you reconsider the policies to remove the employment uses, like hotels, banquet halls, fitness centers and arenas from the General Employment Areas. This policy solution was poorly conceived and heavy-handed, addressing an issue that does not exist in many areas of the City's employment zones, especially the Tudor Chesswood Business Park.

Montecassino Inc.

*Toni Varone*

**Toni Varone**