



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF JAPANESE CANADIANS
GREATER TORONTO CHAPTER

Re: 123 Wynford Drive Heritage Impact Statement

To the members of the Toronto Preservation Board,

We write with respect to the Heritage Impact Assessment addendum prepared by ERA Architects Inc. dated February 16, 2024 (**HIA**) regarding the cultural heritage value of 123 Wynford Drive, the site of the original Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (**123 Wynford**). We are gravely concerned that the HIA does not accurately reflect the cultural heritage value of 123 Wynford Drive and that this application under Sections 33 and 34 of the Ontario Heritage Act to alter the heritage attributes of the property and demolish a building and heritage attributes, respectively, will result in the irrevocable loss of a Toronto landmark.

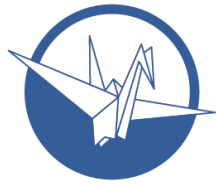
The HIA Addendum does not properly address the cultural significance of 123 Wynford

The HIA includes the Heritage Impact Statement (**HIS**) submitted by ERA Architects Inc. (**ERA**) dated July 22, 2022. At the outset, we note the HIS was completed without any community consultation, including without consultation with members of the Japanese Canadian community. According to the report, “community consultation will occur after the development application submission.” Input from the Japanese Canadian community is, however, fundamental to understanding the heritage and cultural value of 123 Wynford.

We are particularly concerned with the assertion in the HIS 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 culture.” 123 Wynford yields information that contributes to an understanding of the incarceration and dispossession of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, its effect on the evolution of the Japanese Canadian community, as well as the history of the City of Toronto and Canada.

Second, the primary and secondary research conducted by ERA for the HIS and the HIA does not address the history of the Japanese Canadian community’s forced relocation and hardship that the community faced in Toronto, which is directly relevant to the cultural heritage of 123 Wynford. This includes resolutions passed by the City of Toronto banning Japanese Canadians’ entry to the city in the 1940s and efforts to prevent Japanese Canadians from obtaining licenses for trade and business purposes.

Third, the reports and draft statement of significance unduly narrow the significance of the building by largely attributing its symbolism and meaning to its architect, Raymond Moriyama. The draft statement



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of significance states, for example, “The property has design value as representative of a Brutalist style building using Japanese design principles and symbolism meaningful to the building architect, Raymond Moriyama.”

Mr. Moriyama understood that the cultural value of 123 Wynford is greater than any one individual. The emotional spectrum of despair, shame and pride experienced by our community is reflected in what Moriyama termed his “architecture of inclusion.” 123 Wynford is an important symbol of self-respect for the Japanese Canadian community and contributes to all Canadians’ understanding of our shared cultural heritage.

As the city Official Plan states, “Our cultural heritage includes both the tangible and intangible values and attributes of the distinct towns, villages and cities that have come together to create the Toronto we know today. They enable us to reflect upon the diversity of our communities and neighbourhoods.”

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 the City of 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 123 Wynford. To make the building a reality, 75 community members committed to mortgages to finance the building. These individuals put second mortgages on their homes and businesses to fund 123 Wynford. 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 building similarly tell the story of the Japanese Canadian building their community home with the resources they had been restricted to.

In this vein, 123 Wynford was also a gift to the cultural mosaic of Canada and a commitment and contribution to multiculturalism and diversity in Toronto. In 1964, at the official opening of 123 Wynford, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson was the first prime minister to acknowledge that Japanese Canadians interment had indeed been wrong. This was a very important milestone and step toward Canada’s recognition of the injustice of the internment. Prime Minister Pearson stood at the podium at 123 Wynford before hundreds of spectators and stated:



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“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.”

123 Wynford 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 HIA submitted by ERA does not accurately reflect its value.

The Heritage Option Analysis unduly narrows the impact of the proposed changes

The Toronto NAJC further notes that ERA’s Heritage Option Analysis for 123 Wynford (**Heritage Option Analysis**) dated January 15, 2024, significantly underplays how the proposed development would impact significant cultural heritage attributes of this landmark property, including the building and its relationship with the natural environment. In particular, ERA does not fairly consider the difference in impact that certain proposed changes will have on the different heritage attributes listed in its Heritage Option Analysis.

Instead, all of the heritage attributes are presented as equal. ERA’s analysis implies that changing the scale, form and massing of the building will have the same impact as changing the bronze plaque identifying the architect and general contractor of the building. This approach appears to purposely obscure the significant impacts of proposed changes and place undue emphasis on conservation of smaller aspects of the property.

The Summary of Options reinforces this approach by comparing the building’s attributes on a 1 to 1 ratio, ignoring the reality that changing some attributes will have a greater heritage impact than changing others. As a result, the impact of altering or demolishing key attributes is downplayed.



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The Toronto NAJC also notes the use of colour by ERA, which appears to be employed as an advocacy tool, to cast option 2 in a more favourable light. The use of green, light green and red evokes traffic light signalling. This appears intended to frame option 2 in a manner that makes it more acceptable by virtue of it being less destructive than option 1. Attributes which continue to be impacted, albeit less than in option 1, are highlighted in green as if to conclude that a concern has been satisfactorily addressed and the discussion can move on.

The Toronto NAJC understands that it is helpful to compare option 2 to option 1 to understand the varying magnitudes of impact between the two proposed designs. However, the key comparison remains between option 2 and 123 Wynford as it currently exists.

Further, the Heritage Option Analysis also does not adequately disclose how certain attributes are impacted. For example, with respect to the pre-cast concrete structural columns, option 1 states that there will be “retention of some and removal and reinstatement of some poured-in-place and pre-cast concrete” and option 2 states “retention of more concrete, approx. 50% and removal and reinstatement of some poured-in-place and pre-cast concrete.” The Toronto NAJC notes the repeated use of “some” to describe the number of columns impacted by the options. It is difficult to understand why the number of columns impacted by the options is described in such a vague manner.

There is no indication in the Heritage Option Analysis of exactly how many columns are retained in Option 2, though this information is known to the Applicants and ERA. Whilst it is possible for a reader to calculate the number of retained columns by rigorously studying the drawings, this and other impacts will already have been quantified by the Applicants. The Toronto NAJC notes that despite this information being readily available to the Applicants and ERA, ERA chose not to include this information in the Heritage Option Analysis. Ultimately, it appears that the modifications to the design presented in option 2 and the redesign dated January 15, 2024, still fundamentally and severely alters 123 Wynford, including the building exterior, the building interior, the landscape and the relationship between the building and landscape.

The Toronto NAJC also has concerns with the manner in which the heritage impacts have been presented and the choices made by ERA Architects with respect to what information was included in the Heritage Option Analysis and how it was presented.

123 Wynford Drive is a Landmark Building

Members of the Japanese Canadian community have had the opportunity to consult with members of the Heritage Planning during the heritage designation process. Heritage Planning has authored the



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Report for Action from Heritage Planning recommending refusal of the application under Sections 33 and 34 of the Ontario Heritage Act to alter the heritage attributes.

The Toronto NAJC agrees completely with the statement and conclusion in this Report:

The proposal to demolish the building and alter the property would result in the irrevocable loss of the significant cultural heritage values and attributes of this landmark property in Toronto including the building and its relationship with the landscape and natural ravine, its value as a living memorial to the resilience of the Japanese Canadian immigrants to Canada and its associative value as having been designed by the late celebrated architect, Raymond Moriyama. This report recommends the application be refused.

As such, we respectfully request that the Toronto Preservation Board accept the recommendation of Heritage Planning and recommend that City Council refuse the application under Sections 33 and 34 of the Ontario Heritage Act to alter the heritage attributes of the property and demolish a building and heritage attributes, respectively, on the significant property at 123 Wynford Drive in connection with a development proposal to construct two new residential towers.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Deutscher Kobayashi, President

*The NAJC negotiated the historic federal redress agreement and apology of September 22, 1988.
The \$430 million redress agreement was the largest human rights settlement in Canada at that time.*