



Save Heritage Sandbanks Homes

August 29, 2021

Hon. David Piccini, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
and MPP for Northumberland-Peterborough South
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Copied to:

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Dear Minister Piccini,

Re: Response to your Ministry's statement to CKWS Global Kingston News on Friday, August 27, 2021 regarding the Hyatt and MacDonald Houses

Over July and August we have brought forward our concerns and new information regarding the future of the Hyatt and MacDonald Heritage Houses in Sandbanks Provincial Park, in letters of July 16, Aug 5, Aug 18, Aug 25 and in a call with you on Aug 17. You have also received important communications about the matter from Mayor Ferguson on behalf of the Municipality and from others, such as Royal Hotel owner Greg Sorbara, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario President Kae Elgie, and the Prince Edward Historical Society.

Our request has been consistent: Delay demolition to allow time for the details of Ontario Parks' new May 2021 program and accompanying \$6 million fund to be considered as a path forward to securing the future of the heritage houses, as Council and the community fervently wish.

In our letter of Aug 25, we expressed that the community is anxious to know whether you will pause the impending demolition as early as September 1.

Therefore, we were surprised and disappointed to learn one day later, through CKWS Global Kingston News, of this August 26, 2021 statement from your Ministry:

“Proposals by local individuals with an interest in Gray House and MacDonald House were carefully reviewed and considered by the ministry.

Detailed heritage assessments recommend tearing down the buildings as soon as possible in the interest of public health and safety. They are no longer safe to maintain or access.”

The MECP statement answered CKWS Global Kingston News’s question: “We would like to know if this is the case [i.e., Ministry’s intention to demolish] or if the Ministry has reconsidered.”

We respectfully ask that you communicate to us whether you are still in the process of reconsidering or whether the MECP statement confirms your decision to demolish.

It is, of course, deeply disturbing to learn through the media that your Ministry is adhering to its position of tearing down the buildings, but worse to have MECP disseminate to the public (and apparently believe) a statement that is untrue and obfuscating.

Trusting that you are still considering the future of the heritage houses, we would like to address the two misapprehensions in the MECP statement:

1. *Proposals by local individuals ... were carefully reviewed and considered by the ministry*

This was **NOT** the case. There was only one individual, Philip Evans, a Principal of ERA Architects in Toronto, who made an initial offer to Ontario Parks; it was not carefully reviewed and considered. See the attached correspondence between Ontario Parks’ Greg Walsh and Mr Evans, which demonstrates that Ontario Parks:

- did not allow Mr Evans to do the due diligence required to present a formal proposal;
- refused Mr Evans access to the properties to do a condition assessment;
- declined Mr Evans’ offer to provide Ontario Parks with a condition assessment (at his own cost), despite the fact that Ontario Parks had not hired an engineer or architect to produce its own current condition assessment and was relying on the advice of a cultural heritage consultant/archaeologist who is not qualified to provide technical assessments of architectural, structural or health & safety matters; and
- disregarded Mr Evans’ professional understanding of health & safety risk with respect to building condition and his professional comfort level in accessing the buildings and accepting the buildings in “as is” condition.

It is beyond comprehension to our community that Ontario Parks did not permit Mr Evans to do the due diligence required to submit a formal proposal and that Mr Walsh did not have the courtesy to respond to Mr Evans’ February 7, 2020 letter. ERA Architects is recognized as Ontario’s pre-eminent heritage architecture firm; and as the founder of SMALL (now part of ERA Architects), Mr Evans specializes in heritage architecture in small communities such as ours. It appears that officials at Ontario Parks were so focused on demolition that they could not see the opportunity before them.

The MECP statement does not reference Ontario Parks' concern about sole sourcing of Mr Evans' proposal – a concern that could have (and should have) been easily remedied by initiating a procurement process for competitive bids.

According to the Province's *Standards & Guidelines for Conservation of Provincial Heritage Properties*, demolition is the last resort. Your Ministry is required to "apply best efforts to arrange for an alternate use of the property" (E2). "[G]ranting leases, licences, rights, or operating agreements" are recognized alternatives to demolition (F3).

There was an opportunity then, and there is an opportunity now, to adhere to the *Standards & Guidelines*: Take decisive steps to seek proposals for adaptive reuse of the Hyatt and MacDonald Houses. The houses are still standing and the new May 2021 program provides a mechanism for seeking innovative proposals from the private and not-for-profit sectors.

We again urge Ontario Parks to:

- Establish a minimum 6-month delay of demolition to allow time for next steps.
- Pursue community discussions about appropriate uses for the heritage houses, in alignment with the Park purpose and community wishes.
- Issue a Request for Proposal to solicit the interest of third parties in re-purposing the houses; the RFP would define requirements and terms and conditions; the process would include site visits by interested parties; third-party applicants would assess the scope and cost of restoration, as part of their financial analysis and business case.

2. *They are no longer safe to maintain or access*

This finding is **unsupportable** and **misleading** for the public. As noted, the "detailed" assessments were by a person unqualified to provide technical advice about building condition and health & safety matters. In our letter of August 18, we provided you with copies of heritage architect Edwin Rowse's expert Environmental Registry submissions about building condition, which contradict the unqualified cultural heritage consultant.

CKWS subsequently provided us with the full MECP statement, with additional comments that were not broadcast to the public:

"The ministry has since amended the park management plan for Sandbanks Provincial Park to allow for the demolition of the two buildings after consultation with the Indigenous community and the public.

The management plan provides direction on how to effectively manage the park and guides the implementation of projects."

To this we simply say that the management plan may “guide” the implementation of projects, but the management plan does not trump MECP’s requirement to adhere to the Standards & Guidelines. We will be writing to the appropriate officials about compliance with the S&G.

Save Heritage Sandbanks Homes is forward-looking and we continue to seek dialogue between Ontario Parks and the community.

We trust that you are still considering how best to secure the future of the Hyatt and MacDonald Houses.

We request that you **acknowledge receipt of this letter and provide us with a direct response.**

Thank you.

Lead Team for Save Heritage Sandbanks Homes

Liz Driver, Debra Marshall, Sarah Sinclair, Peter Lockyer

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Ontario Parks, Southeast Zone
300 Water Street, 4th Fl N.
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February 4, 2021

Philip Evans
ERA Architects Inc.
625 Church St, Suite 600
Toronto, ON
M4Y 2G1

Dear Mr. Evans,

Thank you for your interest in the Category B Project Evaluation for the demolition of heritage buildings at Sandbanks Provincial Park. I appreciate the submission of your October 7, 2020 comments and proposal submitted during the Notice of Completion period, which ended October 15, 2020.

I would also like to thank you for meeting with the Southeast Zone Planner and Ecologist, and the Assistant Superintendent of Sandbanks on October 29, 2020. They informed me that your presentation and proposal to address challenges by adaptively reusing buildings was very informative.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks appreciates your commitment to preserving heritage buildings in Prince Edward County and we have considered your proposal carefully. We do however respectfully decline your proposal that we pause our processes for three months and later enter into discussion with you regarding a long-term lease for the buildings.

Heritage assessments finalized on March 5, 2020 indicate that the buildings are in an advanced state of disrepair and that they pose significant health and safety risks. Also, Designated Substances Surveys conducted in September 2019 have indicated that the buildings contain asbestos, lead and silica, all of which are hazardous to human health.

Furthermore, the heritage assessments completed for the houses indicate that the buildings are not considered provincially significant and that commemoration is appropriate mitigation.

More information detailing our decision will be posted in the coming months on the [Environmental Registry of Ontario](#).

Ontario Parks, Southeast Zone is interested in engaging with you and other interested parties in discussions regarding the commemoration of these buildings. Should you wish to participate in those discussions, please contact Robin Reilly, Sandbanks Provincial Park Superintendent at robin.reilly@ontario.ca or (613) 393.3319 ext 229.

Thank you again for your continued interest in this project.

Greg Walsh
Southeast Zone Manager

CC: Todd Smith, MPP Bay of Quinte
Robin Reilly, Superintendent, Sandbanks Provincial Park
Kendra Couling, Park Planner, Southeast Zone

From: Philip Evans <PhilipE@eraarch.ca>
Date: Sunday, February 7, 2021 at 11:16 AM
To: Walsh, Greg (MECP) <greg.walsh@ontario.ca>
Cc: Reilly, Robin (MECP) <robin.reilly@ontario.ca>, Couling, Kendra (MECP) <Kendra.Couling@ontario.ca>, todd.smithco@pc.ola.org <todd.smithco@pc.ola.org>
Subject: Re: Heritage Buildings at Sandbanks Provincial Park

Thanks Greg and team,

I appreciate taking the meeting with me last fall and considering my offer.

Regardless of the outcome, I'm totalling excited by any potential to work with the province on the stewardship of these lands and other within the park as outlined in the basins initiative which I know the province shares: <https://basinsproject.ca>

On the matter of the houses, if the province's key concern is the condition I'd like to reiterate: the buildings' condition is not an issue for me or my investors. Our offers will assume as-is condition.

I still have 3 separate and very real investors interested. I just need formal acknowledgement that the province is willing to consider the offers before they invest their time and effort on my behalf.

In light of this, I am willing to extend my offer to include:

1. I accept the building's as-is condition for any offers;
2. I will provide the province a summary of the condition assessment findings (as a sort of second opinion) that you can rely on if my investors do not proceed with an offer at the end of the due diligence;
3. I will commit to access to the property during due diligence be done at our own risk for any concerns the province might have for safety; and
4. I will reduce the due diligence period to 1 month with your expressed acknowledgment to consider offers.

I hope this helps limit any risk for the province, particularly if the only concern is the condition of the buildings.

Respectfully, almost 4 months have passed since my request for a 3-month due diligence. Please give me 1 month to bring you're a committed offer in writing.

Happy to jump on a call,

Cheers,
Philip
647.808.4183

Philip Evans | Principal OAA, CAHP, MRAIC

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Please note that due to the continued spread of COVID-19 and recommendations from public health officials, ERA is moving to a virtual office mode. We remain committed to ensuring the quality of our work remains high to serve the needs of clients, colleagues and the wider community. [Read our full letter to clients](#). If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

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From: Walsh, Greg (MECP) <greg.walsh@ontario.ca>
Date: Friday, February 5, 2021 at 3:38 PM
To: Philip Evans <PhilipE@eraarch.ca>
Cc: Reilly, Robin (MECP) <robin.reilly@ontario.ca>, Couling, Kendra (MECP) <Kendra.Couling@ontario.ca>, todd.smithco@pc.ola.org <todd.smithco@pc.ola.org>
Subject: Heritage Buildings at Sandbanks Provincial Park

Warning: External Sender

Dear Mr. Evans

Thank you for your recent involvement in the consultation process for the Category B Project Evaluation for the demolition of heritage buildings at Sandbanks Provincial Park. Please find attached a response to your proposal that we pause our processes for three

months and later enter into discussion with you regarding a long-term lease for the buildings.

Regards,

Greg Walsh | A/Zone Manager Southeast

Zone- Ontario Parks

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Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

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