



Date: 2023.05.05

To: Mayor & Councillors

From: Katherine Spencer-Ross, President

Re: City Council Meeting of April 26, 2023, Agenda Item 12.2 - Cultural Heritage Evaluation of the former Canadian Pacific Railway Bridge

I am writing on behalf of Heritage Ottawa to express our concern on how City Council dealt with the Built Heritage Committee’s recommendation (motion) on this matter.

The Built Heritage Committee’s motion included an amendment to the staff report recommending that Council issue a Notice of Intention to Designate the bridge under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Heritage Ottawa wrote in support of this course of action. The motion was approved by a 5-3 vote. As is the case with recommendations from standing committees, Council would normally vote on the motion and either approve or reject its recommendation and/or vote on an amended resolution.

In this case Councillor King, Chair of the Built Heritage Committee, at the outset of the discussion at Council, introduced an amendment to the motion approved by the Committee that over-rode the original motion to designate the bridge. This was prior to a Council vote on the original BHC motion.

We appreciate that City Council has a right to agree or disagree with the recommendation of a standing committee and to approve a different course of action. In this case, the Committee’s motion was ignored and replaced with a motion to support the original staff recommendation. By “ignoring” a standing committee motion in this manner, Council is over-riding the responsibility of a standing committee to offer reasoned recommendations with the expectation that they will be dealt with fairly by Council.

In this case, one can understand how members of the Built Heritage Committee, especially “citizen” members who volunteer their expertise to advise Council on heritage matters, may feel that their recommendations (decisions) are held in lower regard by City Council. We were pleased that Councillors Kelly, Menard and Plante expressed some discomfort in how this matter was dealt with. We are disappointed in the actions of those who did not agree that a vote on the BHC motion was the way to proceed.

We would welcome an explanation from the City Solicitor on how this was allowed to occur as we feel that it was contrary to the City regulations dealing with motions from standing committees. We cannot imagine Council ignoring a motion from Planning Committee or FEDCO in a similar manner.

Yours truly,
Katherine Spencer-Ross,
President, Heritage Ottawa

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