

Guelph City Office – clerks@guelph.ca

To Whom It May Concern,

June 6th, 2021

RE: Guelph Correctional Centre, Historical Designation

I am a homeowner in Guelph currently living overseas. I worked at the Guelph Correctional Centre in the late 1990s as the Administrator of the Guelph Assessment and Treatment Unit which was the 100 bed section of the Guelph Correctional Centre dedicated to psychiatric inmates transferred for treatment from around the province, as well as palliative care and chronic care medical services.

I have been involved in Heritage Conservation all my life and was at one time the founding Chair of the Provincial LACAC Association Steering Committee which ultimately became the Community Heritage Fund. I was involved in the organization of the LACAC Conference at Guelph in 1993 and was the founding Chair of the Guelph Architectural Conservancy in 2005.

Before the Guelph Correctional Centre closed, I wrote the text for a book on the history of Guelph Correctional Centre which was an internal publication given as a parting souvenir to the staff of the Centre. (Guelph Correctional Centre 1911-2002, L Sparks Co.2002)

I also met with the Minister of Culture in 2005 as Chair of the Guelph Architectural Conservancy to discuss the fate of the Guelph Correctional Centre. At that time the Minister said they would not directly intervene since a Provincial Government Designation had just become possible, however she said she would monitor the building and perhaps intervene at a later date.

My research into the Correctional Centre found the following:

The main buildings of the Correctional Centre were designed by John M. Lyle Ontario's foremost architect of the Beaux Arts. Other of his works include the Royal Alexandria Theatre and Union Station Toronto. Lyle was educated at the University of Toronto, Yale University and the Ecole Des Beaux Arts, Paris. He was chosen because of his prominence since the Guelph Correctional Centre was to be the prototype and showplace for an model Industrial farm where inmates were rehabilitated through trades and farm work.

1. **The Correctional Centre Grounds** - Lyle was influenced by 19th Century interest in landscape particularly the work of John Loudon, The Parks Movement, the Beautiful Cities Movement (of which he was a member) as well as the general principles of 19th Century picturesque ideals. Buildings were meant to be seen as an integrated part of a landscape. It was thought that beautiful settings had an impact on the morale of people and that parks were a place where different classes could mingle and share ideas. The Beautiful Cities movement sought to create grand boulevards with sweeping vistas such as those in great European and American cities. One of Lyle's projects was a commission to redesign University Avenue in Toronto into a Grand Boulevard. Lyle incorporated his landscape ideas into the designs for the entrance lands to the Guelph Correctional Centre. He created a grand scenic drive from York Street to the main administrative building befitting an important government complex intended to be both a model farm as well as a showplace. Indeed, the correctional centre in its early years hosted tours for many important dignitaries.

For these reasons I believe it is important to preserve lands leading up to the correctional centre as an important piece of landscape architecture in Ontario, and an integral part of the Guelph Correctional complex. This is a park that was maintained beautifully by both correctional staff and inmates right up to the closing. As such it has meaning to many persons who have lived in Guelph and worked at the correctional centre. It is used as an unofficial park now and with the protected ponds and streams to the west could continue as an important recreational and conservation area.

2. **The Correctional Centre Complex** – The main administrative building was built in a restrained Classical Beaux Arts style giving the building a strong but elegant appearance befitting an important prison. Given John M. Lyle’s position as Ontario’s and perhaps Canada’s leading architect of the Beaux Arts this set of buildings should be preserved as a significant piece of the province’s architecture. Included should be the Administration Building, the main tower block and the stone Neo-Palladian style building in the trades area. It could be possible to preserve the whole character of the correctional centre by allowing the preservation of the cell block façade.

There are architecturally significant oak paneled rooms in the administrative building which should also be preserved.

3. Another extremely important structure on the property is the Superintendent’s house. This is a fine and rare example of a pure Arts and Crafts house. To illustrate my point I will quote from “A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles” by Maitland, Hucker, & Ricketts (Broadview Press.1992).

“While the Arts and Crafts Movement influenced a great deal of architecture of the period, there is one kind of house that stands out as particularly characteristic of the movement. The houses of the Arts and Crafts Movement were wonderfully informal and unpretentious, sophisticated in a very subtle way. They were low to the ground, asymmetrical, with steeply pitched roofs. Often these houses were covered with stucco; sometimes they were even built of poured concrete meant to imitate stucco. Their surfaces were plain in the extreme, ornamented only with banks of casement windows. The eaves overhang in a picturesque manner, and the roofing material is sometimes imitation thatch. Built in the 1920s and 1930s these houses did not find widespread popularity, as did the Georgian and Tudor Revivals, but one sees them in older suburbs especially in British Columbia.”

The Superintendent’s House was built in 1921 under the supervision of James Govan a provincial government architect and was named “Elmslie”. It is one of the purer and finer examples of an Arts and Crafts house in Ontario and in its own way as important as the Administration building.

It is important to have formal and clear protections in place. Whitby Mental Health Centre which was a similar kind of building complex built in 1913-16 was re-developed in the early 1990s with the understanding that several of the original buildings would be preserved. In the end everything was pulled down. Likewise, “Northumberland Hall” in Cobourg which was an early mansion was bought by a

developer who claimed he would retain the house as part of the development. This house was also torn down. It is important to be clear and binding at the outset.

If you wish to contact me further you can do so at [REDACTED] – I am a resident of Qatar. Please let me know by email that you have received this and if possible what the outcome of process is.

Thanks

Don Mikel