

# Heritage List report to be revised after residents' opposition

By Melanie Hennessey  
Special to The IFP

Town council has sent staff back to the drawing board with its Heritage Register report after hearing considerable opposition from local residents, who don't want their homes included on the list.

More than 300 homes deemed to have cultural heritage value or interest were set to be approved as additions to the Heritage Register list at last week's council meeting, but the whole item was deferred so that staff can report back to council early next year on a strategy to review the register process.

The move was spurred by 13 concerned residents turning out to a recent Town Community Affairs Committee meeting, with all saying they object to having their properties listed in the Heritage Register, which aims to protect heritage homes from being demolished without due consideration. Those who own "listed" homes and apply for a demolition permit are required to wait a mandatory 60 days so that the municipi-

pality can look at conservation options. Being "listed" on the register is not the same as being "designated"—the latter requires the consent of council for any alterations to the heritage features of the home.

"I like to think we do listen to people. This will give us a chance to reflect on the issues brought forward by the public," said Wards 3&4 Regional Councillor Jane Fogal of the deferral. "Unfortunately this duty we have for the registry didn't come with a manual (from the Province). We have to figure it out on our own."

Frustration with the process is also shared by the affected residents, who are concerned that being listed on the register could affect their property values and insurance rates, increase red tape if they want to make changes to their homes and lead to future designation, amongst other things.

Sixth Line resident Brian Cleave, whose 1912 home is set to be listed on the register, said he thinks the same rules and restrictions should be applied evenly across the board, not just on

Heritage Register homes.

"That's my biggest beef. Either have a 60-day waiting period for everyone or none," he said. "I'm not tearing the house down, but I'm also concerned the list of things you can and can't do (to a listed home) will change."

**'There's no real benefit to the homeowners—its more of a drawback to them.'**

—Acton resident Rob Vandervecht—

Rob Vandervecht of Acton questioned the purpose for putting the homes on the list in the first place. His Victorian-style Church St. East home is among seven properties that have been identified in a council motion for peer review to reassess their cultural heritage value.

"What is the intent of the list? The only thing we've heard is that it will require a 60-day demolition permit," he said. "Does it provide some value to the community? There's no real benefit to

the homeowners—it's more of a drawback to them."

But Patricia Farley, president of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, Halton Hills branch, begs to differ and commended Halton Hills Council for recognizing the value of inventorying local heritage assets.

"Why are they considered assets? Apart from the obvious benefit of attracting heritage tourism dollars, they are assets because they define the unique character of our town and create a sense of pride and place for present and future citizens of Halton Hills," she said.

For those who fear that having their properties listed on the register will lead to future designation, Farley pointed out that in the 40 years since the Province enacted the Ontario Heritage Act, Halton Hills has only designated 30 properties.

"With the exception of the Barber Mill, all were designated with the owner's consent," she said.

She added, "Other than the required 60-day delay, no other restriction is

placed on owners of listed properties. They may paint their homes purple, install vinyl windows, replace porches or even build additions."

The Ontario Heritage Act was established in 1975. It requires municipalities to maintain a register of properties that have cultural heritage value or interest. The Act was amended in 2005 to include a provision for designated and non-designated properties.

The latest round of 331 proposed additions marks phase three of updating the register with listed properties. Phase one was completed in May 2010 with council approval of 170 properties, followed by phase two in January 2012, which added 174 properties.

Throughout phase three the Town has consulted with Heritage Halton Hills and held two public information sessions last year. In response to objections heard then, the municipality hired a consultant to conduct a peer review of 56 properties—20 of which ended up being removed from the proposed list. For more info: [www.halton-hills.ca/heritage](http://www.halton-hills.ca/heritage).



Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette (left) with the assistance of homeowner Tom Pettingill and Ward 2 Councillor Ted Brown (chair of Heritage Halton Hills), unveiled the heritage plaque at The Forbes House in Norval. The home was designated under the Ontario Heritage Act last year. Photo by Amy Douglas

## Heritage plaque placed on former brothel, now known as Forbes House in Norval

A home in Norval—home to some famous citizens and even a brothel—was designated under the Ontario Heritage Act last year by the Town of Halton Hills, and recently saw the addition of a heritage plaque.

Known as the Forbes House property at 401 Draper St., formerly the British Hotel, was built circa 1840 and it was "remarkable" that a frame building used as a hotel (circa 1857 to 1888) is still standing.

Tom Pettingill, the current owner of the property which sits across the street from Norval Presbyterian Church, approached Heritage Halton Hills, requesting the house be considered for designation.

Previous owners have included Major Dr. Armitage Forbes (owned it from 1948-1973) who served with

the Royal Army Medical Corps in both World Wars, John Miller, who later became one of the directors of the Toronto-Guelph Plank Toll-Road and James Forster, the grandfather of renowned Canadian portraitist and Norval native, J.W.L. Forster and Robert Colgan, proprietor of The British Hotel and an innkeeper, also owned the property. It was during Colgan's time it was believed it was a "house of ill repute" as referred to in a diary entry of a young surveyor that was included in Joan Browne Carter's book *Norval History 1820-1950*.

In a report on the property, former HHH member Pat Farley said the house, "is an excellent example of an early village home that reflects a vernacular interpretation of three-bay Georgian-style architecture."

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