

McGibbon owner says heritage list has 'too many strings attached'

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Staff Writer

A local businessman is suggesting the Town of Halton Hills may be breaking one of the Ten Commandments with its new heritage register.

"The Tenth Commandment (says) You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbour's," said George Markou, owner of the McGibbon Hotel in downtown Georgetown. "In dealing with the heritage committee on this particular matter, I fear for my 'house' and perhaps I should also fear for my ox and my ass. With all due respect, please keep your hands off our properties."

Markou was speaking at a recent meeting where council confirmed approval of the Town's new Cultural Heritage Properties List. This is a list of 26 properties, developed by Heritage Halton Hills (HHH), a heritage advisory committee of council.

Markou said he originally wanted to be on the list, as he is fascinated by the history of his hotel. He explained on his own initiative, he has attempted to faithfully restore the 146-year-old building, including adding a verandah dated

back to the 1880s. He also has a small museum inside it, detailing the history of the hotel within the town over the year.

"I personally would like to support it (the register), but with the strings attached it's impossible to do that."

Markou cited the lack of information provided by HHH and Town staff, the committee's adversarial approach to include properties with or without the property owners' approval, and the negative impact (such as the restricted actions) that could occur and may not be compensated by the benefits. He also objected that property owners, who oppose it, must do so with their own financial resources.

"Our view is that inclusion on the register could affect the commercial uses of our own properties," said Markou, "and tie the owners up in costly and inane wrangling with committees that have no vested interest in our properties."

"There is a monumental and operational (financial) impact on our properties, if we agree to inclusion in the register ... and it's ironic because some of us would probably like to support the register. ... There are too many strings attached."

Properties on the cultural list do not require a heritage permit for making changes. However Town

staff will flag all addresses that are on the list and will consult with HHH regarding any development application, building permit or application for a demolition. There will also be a 60-day delay before an issuance of a demolition permit to allow the Town time to consider options.

HHH removed some properties from the proposed 2007 Heritage List— some at the request of the property owners— including: McGibbon Hotel, William P. Brown House, Hornby Repeater Station, Willowbank, olde Hide House, St. Stephen's Church, and Hope Cottage. They could be revisited on future lists.

Ward 3 Councillor Dave Kentner, council's representative on HHH, described the properties as "treasures that belong to the whole community" and so second thought should be given if a demolition is requested.

His wardmate, former HHH member Moya Johnson agreed, commenting that the list says "we do value our town".

Buildings listed as Cultural Heritage Properties are:

- Acton YMCA, 40 Mill St.
- Anthony Home, 279 Maple Ave.
- Baptist Chapel, 14 Main St. S., Georgetown
- Barber Dynamo, Tenth Line West



George Markou, owner of the McGibbon Hotel, originally wanted his property on the Town's new Cultural Heritage Properties List but said he had second thoughts because being on the register could affect how the properties are used commercially. *File photo*

- Barber Paper Mill, 99 River Dr. (currently before Conservation Review Board)
- Beecham House, 13500 Fallbrook Trail
- Berwick Hall, 139 Main St. S., Georgetown
- Cedarvale Bradley House, Community Centre and Cottage, all in Cedarvale Park
- Reed Farmhouse and its chestnut trees, 10114 Eighth Line
- Devereaux House, at Trafalgar Rd. Sports Park
- Farmers Bank, 2 Adamson St. in Norval
- Gooderham House, 503 Guelph St.
- Grandview House, 56 Queen St., Georgetown
- Grey Vernon, 5 Albert St.
- Lawn Bowling Club House, 29 Edith St.
- L'Eglise Sacré-Coeur, 39 Guelph St.
- Limehouse kilns and powder house, Limehouse Conservation Area
- Norval Presbyterian Manse, 402 Draper St.
- Old Post Office, 70 Mill St., Georgetown
- Prospect Park entrance pillars
- Speyside Royal Oak tree (to be formally designated under the Ontario Heritage Act)
- William P. Brown House, 9646 Hwy 7 in Bannockburn

There are 10 other buildings formally designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act and one Heritage District (Syndicate Housing on Bower Ave. in Acton).

For details on each of the buildings go to www.haltonhills.ca

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