

# Church wins appeal from Grier for bishop's residence, building

• from WOMAN on page 1

meted in the area, so there's no point in attempting to recoup the family's investment. "I've been assured by real estate agents that my house has dropped 35 per cent (in value). I don't have any equity in my home. I don't think I can sell it."

She, her husband Foster and their children will rent a house in the Milton area and simply abandon their current residence, she said. When creditors seize the property, she expects they'll take a loss on it even though "we've lived there since 1985. I think they'll lose \$20,000 or \$30,000."

Milena Protich, a lawyer for the Serbian Orthodox Church, said she found it "frankly, irrational" that anyone could consider leaving their home due to the prospect of living next door to the proposed church complex.

Asked if she felt Ms Grier's approval had in any way caused area house prices to slide, she emphatically replied, "no." Ms Protich said those opposing the church "did not call any evidence at the hearing," to back up such a contention.

"It makes you wonder what she thinks we are," Ms Protich added.

"I can't live here with what's going on," Ms Daniels said.

"I can't justify keeping my children under duress." She said she fears that the civil war which has raged in Yugoslavia will spill over into the area. She is afraid Croatian sympathizers could clash with Serbians on the church grounds.

Ms Daniels alleged that Ms Protich authorized patrols of the grounds by Serbian men and that Ontario Provincial Police helicopters regularly fly over the site. "It's like living in an armed camp."

Ms Protich said she had "a couple of people stay overnight" once because of vandalism, in which picnic decorations were ruined by trespassers. Asked if any type of military-related activities were underway on the property, she replied, "of course not. We don't have anybody patrolling it. We're a church."

All Serbs are aware of "the grave problems in our homeland" and many have family members there for whom they fear, "but we live here," Ms Protich stressed.

She said she found such concerns over church activities "extremely depressing. We have done our best

to allay the fears. I don't know what to say. It's really quite disheartening."

Ontario Provincial Police are known to fly helicopter traffic patrols in the area, because the force is responsible for Highway 5. A spokesperson could not be reached at press time to address Ms Daniels' suspicions that police feel constrained to overfly the church property, too.

Ms Daniels contends that the church plans to eventually make good on something similar to its original ambitions — a 53,000 square foot complex that includes a monastery built around the recently approved bishop's residence. She said it amounts to a North American headquarters.

The church did indeed submit larger designs to the Niagara Escarpment Commission initially, but revised them twice to create the current renderings, which entail a 10,000 square foot bishop's residence and a 2,000 square foot church.

Ms Daniels said the current approval is merely a springboard. "Of course they will" attempt to gain further approvals for more construction, she said. "Nothing they can say will convince me otherwise."

Ms Protich said that in current proposals to modify Niagara Escarpment Commission planning policies, smaller scale development will be all the commission permits within its jurisdiction. She called that a "fairly strong signal" as to what will and will not be allowed on church property.

She also noted that Ms Grier said her approval of the development "was not an endorsement" of any additional construction.

As far as the church itself is concerned, "how can you say what you will do in 10 or 20 years?" However, "there are no plans now."

Ms Daniels said the McNiven Road Action Committee met last week to talk over possible future strategy. She said two options were discussed. One was to lobby the opposition leaders at Queen's Park to press Ms Grier on the issue.

The second was hiring a private investigator to probe into whether there was any "undue political pressure" placed on Ms Grier.

Ms Protich said the church has not lobbied Ms Grier.



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Sharon Daniels

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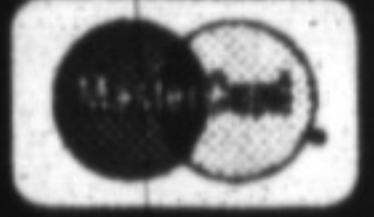
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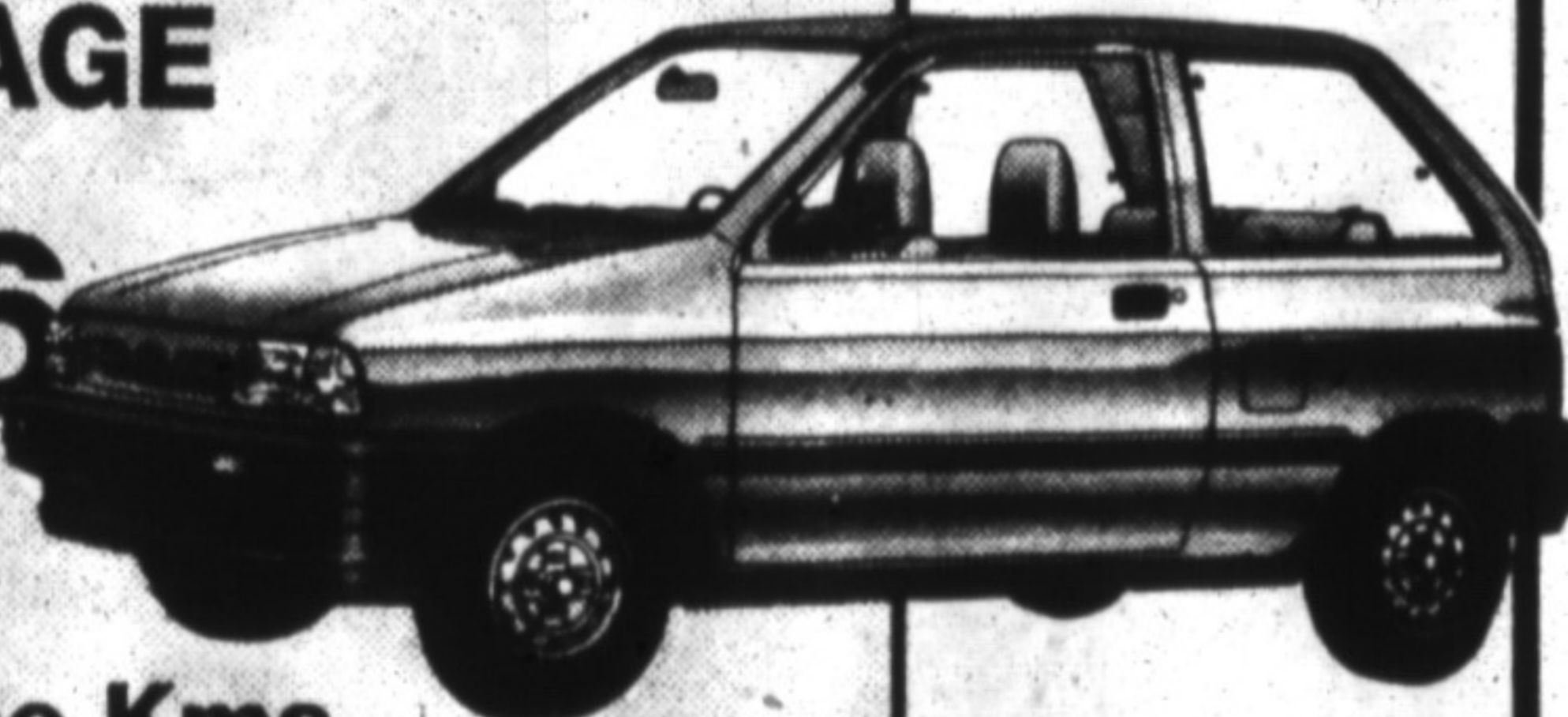
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