



Lowertown Community Association
Association Communautaire de la basseville

Marc Aubin,
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205-100 Boteler Street,
Ottawa, ON K1N 8Y1

Ms. Marie Lemay, CEO, and Board of Directors,
National Capital Commission,
202-40 Elgin Street,
Ottawa, ON K1P 1C7

April 20th, 2012

Dear Ms. Lemay and Members of the NCC Board,

Thank you for your response of April 12 to my community association's letter in the matter of the homes that the NCC is proposing to demolish on Sussex Drive.

In our letter, we listed a number of viable options to save the properties on Sussex Drive. There are options available to both the NCC and City that could avoid the demolition of these houses on Sussex. Unfortunately, your letter of response seems to point to the City of Ottawa as having sole responsibility for this current challenge before us. However, both the NCC and City of Ottawa are partners in this project and the properties affected are owned by the NCC. We can all work together to contribute to a solution for this challenge and I request that the NCC take an active leadership role in helping guide this to a positive outcome.

The suggestion that reconstruction of the road goes back to the 1960's is superfluous. There was no plan in the 1960's to add bike lanes to Sussex Drive. In addition, I would hope that we are not planning our transportation system based on ill-conceived and destruction transportation policies from that era. We are now in the 21st century and we know that this is not about a curve in the roadway, but about the desire to add bike lanes and to maintain the lanes currently available to cars.

In our previous letter, we recommended that the partial removal of one lane is one among a number of viable options. The City of Ottawa's transportation department, not surprisingly, will defend any lane reductions at all costs. We have had significant experience with their defiance in regards to logical and modern urban transportation planning in the downtown. We would encourage you to strongly push back on this 1960's transportation mentality. If you are committed to helping us, then I would encourage you to write or speak directly with Mayor Watson regarding this matter. We invite you all to



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come and take a walk with us on site as well and see the folly of this situation. We can find a win-win solution here.

The alternative to the NCC not acting on our plea for help is clear. The NCC has a history of neglect in regards to our residential community and this current situation could act to reinforce this negative truth. As an example, I have attached a copy of another case study – 44 Bolton Street (see annex). This house is one that was owned by the NCC and only a few doors down off Sussex from the current buildings threatened. This article demonstrates a history of disregard by the NCC for the residential heritage of this area. Sadly, Mr. Sincennes, one of the local heroes of this community, who was willing to stand up to big institutions like your own in the Bolton Street case, passed away recently. It is unfortunate that we must rely on the voices of these few people to try and communicate the important and true value of our area's heritage. It is sad to know that his efforts failed and that the tradition of destroying this area's residential heritage continues to this day. Let us turn this around. Let us acknowledge that having a working-class heritage district in the national capital is a treasure to share with all Canadians and beyond.

Finally, before closing, I would also like to inform you that we have made yet another important discovery about this property's history. In addition to Adrienne Clarkson, Jacques Faucher, local author, was born in the row house. Mr. Faucher recently released a book about the history of west Lowertown, *Sur les chemins de ma memoir, Un écho de la Basse-Ville*. He is a well-respected member of Ottawa's francophone community and has contributed greatly to a renewed interest in Lowertown's heritage.

I highly encourage the NCC to take on a leadership role here in whatever capacity necessary to ensure we preserve Lowertown's heritage. This should be seen as an opportunity to demonstrate that the NCC is an institution for the 21st century – one that is ready to find common ground and build a capital that leaves room for all of us.

Respectfully yours,

Marc Aubin,
President,
Lowertown Community Association

cc. MP Mauril Bélanger
MPP Madeleine Meilleur
Mayor Watson
Councillor Fleury
Leslie Maitland, President, Heritage Ottawa



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Annex – 44 Bolton Street

Horror Story: 44 Bolton Street

You think your landlord is bad? Check out this classic from the Citizen archives.

In the 1960s and the early '70s, the NCC, zealous to control development near Sussex Drive, bought and/or expropriated a wide swath of Lowertown. It wanted the property for embassies and organizations it found suitably important. In the process, they spoiled the neighbourhood.

The Ottawa Citizen -- Final
City Monday June 29, 1992 E1

CLOSE-UP

Lax landlord: NCC lets house decay; Commission had big plans for house fire department now calls a hazard

Patrick Dare
CITIZEN

Bolton Street should be one of those charming, trendy streets that propels yuppies into mortgage city. It's in the heart of old Bytown, dotted with houses built in the 1800s. You can throw a stone to Sussex Drive, and the Byward Market is a stroll away.

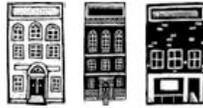
Some houses in the neighborhood are tastefully renovated. But not 44 Bolton St. It's owned by the National Capital Commission and it's a bit of a mess.

The windows are boarded, the front veranda and back porch have been carted away. A patch of tall grass stands in front of the red brick house. The Ottawa Fire Department, and some neighbors, consider it a firetrap. A teen gang recently threw bricks at it.

Demolition appears to be the likely fate of the house, built in 1896. The fire department is poised to issue an order forcing the NCC to either fix the building or tear it down.

But there was no need for 44 Bolton to become a derelict building, no reason to call in the wreckers. The NCC has decided the house doesn't fit into its plans after all and will likely sell the property.

Too bad the NCC didn't come to that conclusion two years ago, when it evicted the two families living in the house and one tenant offered to buy it.



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NCC records indicate it bought 44 Bolton in 1961, though some local residents say it was in the 1970s. It owns about a dozen residences in the area, sites that the NCC considers important because they border Sussex Drive. The Crown corporation's recent thinking was that these lands would become part of the Confederation Boulevard scheme, with high-profile organizations such as the Red Cross having offices there.

But Heather Bradley, chief of media relations for the NCC, says those plans have been scaled down.

"Our plans are not as ambitious. It (44 Bolton) is just surplus to our needs."

In the past two years, the value of 44 Bolton has dropped like a stone because of neglect. Inside fixtures were taken out; the inside stairs were stolen.

"They've sort of nickelled and dimed it to death," says Estelle Lauzon, who lives in the house next door.

Bob Crothers, chief of fire prevention for the City of Ottawa, is so concerned about the deteriorating state of the building that he's about to issue a fire marshal's order ordering the NCC to fix the house, or demolish it within 30 days.

He says fires in vacant buildings are all too common, and there is a concern that any fire would spread quickly to neighboring houses.

Bradley says the NCC doesn't have the money to renovate 44 Bolton, so it will either sell or demolish the house. Two years ago the NCC estimated full renovations would cost about \$173,000.

Bradley added that the NCC wanted to tear down the house two years ago and put a temporary park on the site, but a public outcry stopped those plans.

The \$173,000 estimate makes Ray Sincennes laugh.

"It just needed a little outside paint," says Sincennes, who lived in 44 Bolton with his wife and four children until they were evicted in 1990. A second family lived upstairs.

"They (the NCC) had just put a new roof and a new furnace in," he says, adding that he paid for some electrical and plumbing work himself. And he was willing to do more repairs. "I even offered to buy the house. (The NCC) said no," Sincennes recalls.

Christopher Barker of Rhodes Real Estate is trying to sell a house next door. He says the derelict state of 44 Bolton is causing anxiety for both his client and prospective buyers.



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He says the NCC is the only organization in the country that can afford to buy up property and just sit on it.

The Bolton Street property isn't the only vacant house downtown owned by the NCC. Across town, in the heart of the Golden Triangle, a patch of weeds is growing outside 24 Robert St. That house, bought by the NCC in 1972, was being used until three years ago as a field office for staff maintaining streets and the Rideau Canal.

Owners of nearby \$300,000 houses cut the lawn of the property because the NCC doesn't do it. One neighbor said two prospective buyers of her house didn't buy because of 24 Robert's rundown state. The NCC is in the process of selling the property.

Lin Baxter, president of the Lowertown West Community Association, says it's "kind of stupid" that the NCC buys an old property and lets it run to seed. He says the key problem appears to be the NCC's inability to renovate buildings efficiently.

Bradley defends the NCC's record on property management by pointing to successful restorations of heritage buildings along Sussex Drive near the market.

"From the federal government's point of view, it (44 Bolton) doesn't have heritage value," says Bradley. "It may have some sentimental value for the neighborhood."

Sincennes first lived on Bolton Street in 1952, when he was seven years old. He remembers when houses on the other side of the street were bought and levelled so the Japanese embassy could be built.

As he walks through his old neighborhood, Sincennes recalls the days of a thriving Lowertown, where there was a strong sense of identity for a tightly knit, mostly francophone community.

"Nobody had a pot to piss in let alone a window to throw it out of," he muses.

To Sincennes, the demise of 44 Bolton St. symbolizes the destruction of Lowertown.

"Their long-term plans are to tear everything down," he says of the NCC. "They do as they please."

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44 Bolton was demolished soon after. In 1994, the NCC turned around and decided that only properties actually on Sussex Drive or right beside Sussex were of "national interest," and proceeded to sell six other properties in the area, including a house at 36



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Bolton Street expropriated in 1969 and a vacant lot on Cathcart. The oldest of the houses, a duplex at 47-49 Cathcart St., was built about the time of Confederation according to heritage experts at the City of Ottawa. As for the NCC's legacy on Sussex itself, the US embassy is a security hazard with permanent concrete barriers blocking the street, while the Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti embassies on the "mile of history" beg the question, what history is that, then?

Source: <http://www.nccwatch.org/horror/boltonstreet.htm>