



Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition

36 Hillview Crescent
Midhurst ON L9X 1N4

July 29, 2021

The Honorable Lisa MacLeod
Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, and Culture Industries
6th Floor
438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON
M7A 1N3

Email c: The Honorable Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation
Kevin Finnerty, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, and Culture Industries
Debbie Jewell, Assistant Deputy Minister, Heritage, Tourism and Culture Division
Beth Hanna, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Heritage Trust

Re: The Lower Landing
20866 Yonge Street, East Gwillimbury, Ont.
Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest of Provincial Significance

Minister MacLeod,

Pursuant to clause 34.5 (1) (a) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* please accept this as a formal request for you to exercise the authority provided you as Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, and Culture Industries to designate the property at 20866 Yonge Street, East Gwillimbury, Ont. as a Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest of Provincial Significance.

The property is located on the eastern shore of the Holland River East Branch at Lot 118 Concession 1 WYS, East Gwillimbury. The entire eastern shore in the area of Lot 118 is recognised for its cultural heritage significance to Indigenous peoples and for its association with the Euro-Canadian colonial exploration and settling of what became Upper Canada via the historical site of the Lower Landing.

As the Minister may be aware, the Province of Ontario has undertaken plans towards the Bradford Bypass, a proposed 16.2-kilometre long freeway connecting Highway 400 and Highway 404 in the Regional Municipality of York and County of Simcoe. The proposed route crosses the shores of the Holland River East Branch at Lot 118 Concession 1 WYS, East Gwillimbury.

Recognising that the 2002 Approved EA Right-of-Way of the Bradford Bypass would impact the registered archaeological site BaGv-42 East Holland River on the property at 20938 Yonge Street, the northern parcel of Lot 118, two proposed Refinement Alternatives cross the river's

eastern shore further south, the southern parcel of Lot 118. This is the privately owned, residential property of 20866 Yonge Street, East Gwillimbury.

Regardless of the ultimate route of the Bradford Bypass, the construction of a bridge over either parcel will have a negative and permanent impact on the ability for the property at 20866 Yonge Street to yield, or have the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of Ontario's history, the property's aesthetic, visual and contextual importance to the province, as well as its association with events of importance to the province.

The Town of East Gwillimbury was not requested to exercise its authority under section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* to designate 20866 Yonge Street as a property of cultural heritage value or interest as research and application of *O. Reg. 10/06, Criteria For Determining Cultural Heritage Value Or Interest Of Provincial Significance* supports this as a property of provincial significance rather than as of municipal significance.

Please see the attached completed checklist of preliminary documentation as well as documentation and rationale supporting this request to you to designate the property as a property of cultural heritage value or interest of provincial significance.

I look forward to your response at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

Margaret Prophet
Executive Director, Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition

APPENDIX

Property address:
20866 Yonge St, East Gwillimbury, ON, L9N 0J8

Legal Description:
PT Lot 118 Con 1 W Yonge St East Gwillimbury
PTS 1 & 2 65R-11336
ST B74151B, Town of East Gwillimbury
PIN 03416-0046

Property owner:
Thomas Kar Shing To
Olivia Wai Mun Luu

Summary of special association for historic, social, or cultural reasons or because of traditional use:

- For millennia, Indigenous peoples used this area of the Holland River as a junction to get to and from other places. Arriving here from the south were trails from Lake Ontario following the Don River and running northwest from the lake along the Rouge River. Further west, starting at the mouth of the Humber River on Lake Ontario, the Toronto Carrying Place and its trails took foot travellers north to its terminus on the Holland River West Branch where both the river and, its believed, a trail headed east to join up here on the Holland River East Branch.
- For generations the area north of here was home to the Wendat and other Algonquian and Iroquoian-speaking peoples. To these peoples the Lower Landing area was the natural focus of assembly and their travels between points south and home.
- It's believed the first Europeans in the Lower Landing area were Jesuit missionaries Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Joseph Chaumonot passing through on their return to the Wendat in the spring of 1641.
- Notable French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle used this route on his August 1681 voyage to the Mississippi.
- For over 150 years the fur trade, including coureurs de bois, voyageurs, and the North West Company, used this route to the upper Great Lakes and beyond.
- The first definitive record of the Lower Landing's use is of that by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe and his party on October 11, 1793. They stopped here on their return from Georgian Bay to the new capital of Upper Canada at York while seeking a northern military route. Alexander McDonell, Home District Sheriff, who accompanied Simcoe, wrote in his journal:

"11th - About 9 O'clock left our encampment, embarked and soon got out of the Lake, paddled up the River about three miles, then got in to another River, and about 2 O'clock got to the landing place at the red pine fort."

On their October 1793 map, Lt. Robert Pilkington, Royal Engineer, and Alexander Aitken, Deputy Surveyor, also of Simcoe's party, marked this location as Landing Place.

- Following a survey by Augustus Jones, Deputy Surveyor General, work cutting out a trail by the Queen's Rangers began on January 4, 1796 and reached the area of the Lower Landing on February 16. The importance of this to the fledgling colony cannot be understated. In a February 27, 1796 letter to the British Secretary of State for the Home Department, Lt. Gov. Simcoe wrote:

"The Road from York to the Head Waters of Lake Huron has been opened, and by these means, a very excellent Tract of Country is rendered available to future settlers."

- From then on the Lower Landing became of strategic importance to the British colony, its military, its traders, and its settlers. Soon after, a depot of hewn log trade and storage buildings was erected by the North West Company to support its vast fur trade empire. Here Indigenous traders regularly arrived from all over the upper Great Lakes by fur laden canoes to do business. Records speak of no less than 30 large wigwams at times clustered about the banks of the Holland River.
- In 1812, David Thompson, the great cartographer and explorer of Canada's west and participant in the Boundary Commission, stopped at the Lower Landing on his way home to Montreal.
- The pivotal role of the Lower Landing in the survival of the young Canadian colony during the War of 1812 is immeasurable. The September 1813 defeat of the British Navy by the Americans in the Battle of Lake Erie was of strategic importance. This heightened the risk of American invasion of Canada as well as their recapture of Fort Michilimackinac, a military and trade outpost strategically located at the straits between Lakes Huron and Michigan, and the resulting British loss of control of the northwest and upper Great Lakes. Lt. Col. Robert McDouall of the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles was ordered to strengthen Michilimackinac's defences. This being the only practical and safe departure point remaining for a route to Lake Huron, in February 1814, with 10 officers, 220 infantry and artillerymen, and 20 seamen McDouall travelled to York and made his way to the Lower Landing, now an important military and naval depot. Following the trek to the Willow Creek Depot at the end of the portage to the Nottawasaga River, south of present day Edenvale the company built a fleet of 29 bateaux to carry supplies and the reinforcements for Michilimackinac. Arriving at Michilimackinac on May 18, McDouall set about strengthening its defences. On August 4, American Captain Arthur Sinclair with 600-700 troops and a fleet of four brigs anchored off Michilimackinac and attempted a landing. With McDouall's preparation, the fort's defenders successfully defeated the attack on Michilimackinac resulting in Sinclair sending most of his ships back to Lake Erie.
- The Royal Ontario Museum's 1815 painting by Robert Irvine of the Royal Naval Depot Holland Landing shows the many buildings and wharves that stood at the Lower Landing at the time of Lt. Col. McDouall's use.
- On the second of his three Arctic expeditions, in April 1825, renowned explorer Sir John Franklin leading the Mackenzie River Expedition is recorded as arranging passage across Lake Simcoe from the Lower Landing.

- During the first decades of the century, the annual distribution of gifts to First Nations from across Upper Canada took place here. At times these events were the occasion of large missionary meetings which included many Indigenous people. One such was attended by the Rev. Peter Jones, (Kahkewāquonāby) Ojibwe chief and Methodist minister, who described the events in his journal of August 13-15, 1828.
- From the middle of the 19th century until the building of the railway, the Lower Landing's docks were a bustling departure point for many steamers carrying mail, cargo, and passengers across Lake Simcoe.

Attachments

- extract of October 1793 map by Lt. Robert Pilkington, Royal Engineer, and Alexander Aitken, Deputy Surveyor who accompanied Lt. Gov. Simcoe, noting location of Landing Place
- Instrument #11057, December 16, 1908 sale of parts of Lot 118 Con 1 WYS East Gwillimbury from Duncan Bell to His Majesty, King Edward VII including a Plan noting location of Lower Landing
- Ontario Heritage Trust historical background report supporting its provincial plaque to commemorate the Holland's Landing Depot