

**Sent:** Friday, September 27, 2024 1:30 AM

**To:** PEC <[pec@london.ca](mailto:pec@london.ca)>

**Cc:** Lysynski, Heather <[hlysynsk@London.ca](mailto:hlysynsk@London.ca)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Heritage Value of London City Hall - A Modern Landmark for a Modern Era (PEC Meeting, Oct 2nd)

Hello Heather

Please share my communication below with members of PEC and ensure that it is added to the public agenda for the upcoming meeting on Wednesday, October 2nd.

If the Committee members or you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,

Sandra

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Dear members of the Planning and Environment Committee

I am writing in support of the proposed heritage designation for 300 Dufferin Avenue, designed as and currently home to our City Hall. As the seat of London's civic government and municipal offices, this landmark building holds significant history of notable events of our city's evolution over the past 53 years since its official opening on September 22nd, 1971. Your predecessors, the people who have served our community, and the decisions that have transpired under its roof have marked the many important changes that shape our growing city. It is the heart of our city and has continually evolved to serve the needs of you, our elected representatives, and our fellow Londoners appointed as staff to manage the myriad of day-to-day services provided to residents. This building was purposefully designed to be, and can continue to be, a flexible and contemporary environment for people to work in and be inspired to help create a vibrant sustainable community for all.

Like many municipalities across Canada including Ottawa and Hamilton, London celebrated the optimism and booming prosperity of the post-World War II and Centennial Era by creating this modern civic building. Hamilton's city hall, designed by Stanley Roscoe in a similar Mid-Century style in 1960, was heritage-designated in 2005 and underwent a [multi-award winning revitalization project in 2010](#). Ottawa's Modernist former City Hall opened in 1958 and was [heritage-designated 23 years ago in 2001](#) at the tender age of 43 years young; it now houses offices for Global Affairs Canada. These important recognitions mark the historical, architectural, and cultural heritage criteria outlined in the Ontario Heritage Act. London's City Hall — like its contemporary landmarks in other cities across Canada — is also worthy of conservation and celebration.

The building was designed by London architect Philip Carter Johnson, renowned for creating houses of worship. He is the *only* London area recipient of Canada's highest honour in architecture: a Massey Medal in architecture (now the Governor General's Medals in Architecture). He was honoured in 1952 for his modern design of Knox Presbyterian Church (1951) in Goderich which still serves its congregation today, some 73 years later. Some of his other notable buildings include:

1. London Gospel Temple, Grand Avenue, 1951 (*Demolished*)
2. St. Hilda's Memorial Church, Toronto, 1954 (*Demolished*)
3. London Trend House, Fanshawe Park Road, 1954
4. B'nai Israel Synagogue (now Or Shalom Synagogue), Huron Street, 1960
5. Unitarian Fellowship Hall (now Gibbons Park Montessori School), Victoria Street, 1961
6. Church of the Transfiguration, Bromleigh Avenue, 1962
7. Gethsemane United Church, Huron Street, 1964 (*Demolished*)
8. St. Andrew the Apostle, Fallons Lane, 1967

City Hall and the Civic Square / Centennial Hall complex were Mr. Johnson's final works. Eerily similar to the tragic story of architect Viljo Revell who died prematurely at the young age of 54 after designing Toronto's iconic City Hall ([heritage-designated in 1991](#) only 26 years after its opening), Philip Carter Johnson experienced cardiac health issues during the

construction of London City Hall and died not long after the completion of this landmark multi-year project.

The striking design is a rare Southwestern Ontario example of Expressionist Architecture, created as two interconnecting parts: the oval base clad in black Peribonka granite from Quebec representing the People and you, our elected representatives, housed in the Council chambers and the Mayor's office which each project from the base in elevated floating podiums; and the tower clad in white marble from Tweed, Ontario representing and housing the administrative staff who serve the people. These substantial high quality materials were carved from our ancient landscape and should be conserved and protected in situ, not destroyed for landfill. The greenest building after all is the one already standing, that evolves over time to serve new functions and new occupants.

Key architectural elements that define the heritage character of City Hall include:

1. Steel & glass base on either wing of the building designed with an elegant International Style
2. Colourful glazed brick at the base & rooftop patio level in distinct colours of the era (the large planters in Centennial Plaza with matching glazed brick were unfortunately demolished several years ago)
3. Interior lobby in white marble and black granite that matches the exterior cladding; the lobby floor's grid pattern echoes the original pattern of limestone pavers in Centennial Plaza (now Reg Cooper Square); the open lobby originally featured a circular reception desk with a circular light fixture suspended above it which complemented the one hanging above the staircase
4. Grand curved terrazzo marble staircase poured in place; the metal handrail and suspended light track were originally brass but were unfortunately re-done with silver-tone paint or lacquer several years ago but this could be restored
5. The original wall clock designed for the lobby was removed some years ago but is allegedly in storage and could be re-installed
6. Mayor's office has rosewood panelling which was unfortunately painted over some years ago but could be restored

7. Council Chambers features white maple sound baffles on the side walls which are a signature detail of architect Philip Carter Johnson; these originally included accent lighting

In addition to the original architectural drawings held by the City, there are extensive archival holdings and records of City Hall in clippings files at the London Room of London Public Library, photographs at Western Archives, and CFPL film at Ontario Archives in Toronto — from its original proposals, calls for designs, presentations, construction and budgeting, grand opening, etc.

As you remember London City Hall's 50th anniversary in 2021 was celebrated during COVID with a [short documentary film](#) created by the City to help the story of the building and London architect Philip Carter Johnson. The building is also featured on the [DoCoMoMo Ontario gallery](#). When it was officially opened by London MPP and former premier John P. Robarts we marked the grand occasion with four days of celebrations, tours, and cultural events; a variety of popular collectable souvenirs were sold by private enterprises and snapped up by enthusiastic residents and visitors. We can recapture that enthusiasm and civic pride by embracing our history, our landmarks of all eras, and our place as a mature sustainable city growing forward into the 21st century.

I urge you to consider designating our City Hall building at 300 Dufferin Avenue under part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act to ensure its continued presence as significant landmark at the heart of our city. Time marches on, so does our understanding and appreciation of the changing definition of heritage.

Regards,

Sandra Miller

**Forest City Modern**

***Don't miss this year's 13th annual MidMod Movies in partnership with London Public Library!***

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 1, 2024 12:42 AM

**To:** PEC <pec@london.ca>

**Cc:** Lysynski, Heather <hlysynsk@London.ca>

**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Heritage Value of London City Hall - A Modern Landmark for a Modern Era (PEC Meeting, Oct 2nd)

Hi Heather

Please include my delegation request to the Committee for Wednesday afternoon. I've included below the text that I would like to present if permitted to address the Committee. Please include it in the public agenda if required.

Thanks!

Sandra

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Mr. Chair & members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

You will have read my communication championing the heritage value of City Hall which I sent to you via email and is included as part of your added agenda.

Your predecessors, the people who have served our community, and the decisions that have transpired under its roof have marked the many important changes that shape our growing city. It is the heart of our city and has continually evolved to serve the needs of you, our elected representatives, and our fellow Londoners appointed as staff to manage the myriad of day-to-day services provided to residents. This building was purposefully designed to be — and can continue to be — a flexible and contemporary environment for people to work in and be inspired to help create a vibrant sustainable community for all.

The design and construction of our City Hall was funded by the citizens of London - this seat of civic government was built by the people of London, for the people of London. We are stewards of this legacy, caretakers of our predecessors' work and vision. Much as we protect and maintain landmark buildings such as the Houses of Parliament in Ottawa and Queens Park in Toronto among many others, so must we protect and maintain our City Hall building — whether it remains our seat of civic government or takes on a new role to serve a new purpose.

Cities including Hamilton, Ottawa, and Toronto have honoured their Modernist City Hall buildings with heritage designation, winning awards for upgrades and restorations. These important recognitions mark the historical, architectural, and cultural heritage criteria outlined in the Ontario Heritage Act. London's City Hall — like its contemporary landmarks in other cities across Canada — is also worthy of conservation and celebration.

Our City Hall was designed by prominent London architect Philip Carter Johnson, renowned for creating houses of worship. He is the only London area — indeed SW Ontario — recipient of Canada's highest honour in architecture: a Massey Medal in architecture (now the Governor General's Medals in Architecture). He was honoured in 1952 for his Modernist design of Knox Presbyterian Church in Goderich which still creatively serves its community today, some 73 years later. By honouring this important building, his final project, we also honour him as an accomplished Londoner.

The striking design of this building is a rare Southwestern Ontario example of Expressionist Architecture, created as two interconnecting parts: the oval base clad in black Peribonka granite from Quebec representing the People and you, our elected representatives, housed here in the Council chambers and the Mayor's office; and the tower clad in white marble from Tweed, Ontario representing and housing the administrative staff who serve Council and the people. These substantial high quality materials were carved from our ancient landscape and should be conserved and protected in situ, not destroyed and cast into landfill. The greenest building after all is the one already standing, that is maintained and upgraded — evolving over time to serve new functions and new occupants.

As I noted in my communication to you, there are a number of key architectural elements that define the heritage character of City Hall including the white maple sound baffles on

the side walls of this chamber which are a signature detail of architect Philip Carter Johnson's. The next time you walk the grand terrazzo marble staircase from the lobby, stop about halfway along and look down to a step on the east side. You'll notice an odd anomaly in the marble: a workman accidentally dropped his pipe into the terrazzo mix while it was being poured and —unable to retrieve it — the pipe was left in place and sanded over. This is but one story of hundreds that our City Hall holds.

It may feel odd, even confounding, to designate buildings constructed in some of our lifetimes as heritage... does that mean we're heritage?! It's important to remember there is no minimum age for a building to be designated — it's the historical, architectural, and cultural significance that is being recognized. Until recently few buildings of the post-World War II period had been evaluated or included in the City of London's Heritage Inventory, despite the fact that a growing number are now almost 80 years old. Nevertheless, time marches on and we now have a much greater understanding and appreciation of the significant value of this era's built heritage. Architectural and heritage advocacy organizations across Canada and around the world have updated their mandates and expanded their work in the past few decades with the realization that if we do not, we would simply be repeating without learning the costly lessons of the 20th century when we destroyed countless important and valuable built heritage structures — including, ironically, the 50-70 year old Victorian buildings that once stood on this Civic Complex site.

This building holds our history; it tells the story of our growing city and the people who live here and who serve it. You can help re-ignite Londoners' civic pride by embracing our history, our landmarks of all eras, and our place as a mature confident and sustainable city growing forward into the 21st century.

I urge you to to consider designating our City Hall building at 300 Dufferin Avenue under part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act to ensure its continued presence as significant landmark at the heart of our city. Time marches on, so does our understanding and appreciation of the evolving meaning of heritage.

Thank you,  
Sandra Miller