

Writing is on the wall for Pickering houses

Editorial, June 21, 2012

There comes a point when you're just throwing good money after bad and enough's enough.

Sadly, this seems to be the case with the historic properties on the airport lands in Pickering.

Six months ago we commended the City of Pickering for doing what it could to help preserve some of these homes.

If you remember, the City leased 10 properties, with six held to see if there was any interest from private buyers. On one hand, the houses were offered for free. But the rub was that a buyer would have to pay to move the house, and this costs a lot of money. As well, these houses, architecturally and historically significant as some of them are, have been sitting empty for years and are in bad condition.

The update is two of the properties seem to be on the way to private sales and another is destined for Pickering Museum Village.

At this point the City should just say, 'our hands are tied, we've done what we can'.

The temporary leases expire at the end of this month, when the properties revert back to Transport Canada.

So a motion at Monday night council's meeting from Councillor Peter Rodrigues, to defer a decision and in effect extend the leases to September for community input, may be well-intended, but it's not practical. There's nothing more that can be done to save the houses. They should be photographed for posterity before the wrecking ball arrives, but saving them seems wishful thinking.

Spending another \$9,000 or so to extend the leases would be a waste of money. Now, you may recall that in December we argued spending roughly \$31,000 to

protect the properties was not a lot of money. We believed that then and holding the properties has been beneficial to an extent, with at least some saved from destruction. While the onus was not on the City to do this, it was well worth a try.

As for community input, it's well known that many in Brougham and in the general area are angry that the area has declined, laying the blame squarely at the feet of Transport Canada. We know how they feel; the question is, what can be done with these properties?

The answer is there's no more to be done. They belong to Transport Canada and sit on its land.

Still, it's very sad that these relics from Pickering's interesting past will soon fade into history.