

September 14th, 2023

The Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor, 777 Bay Street,
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Re: Rand Estate Development, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Dear Minister Calandra,

The Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA) is following with great interest the development proposal for the Rand Estate in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The grounds as we find them today were designed by the husband-and-wife landscape architecture team of Howard and Lorrie Dunnington-Grubb, two of the original founding members of the CSLA in 1934. The CSLA Cultural Landscapes and Legacy Committee shares the opinion of The Niagara Foundation in considering the Rand Estate as a "*provincially significant heritage asset*" and would support a balanced approach to meeting the multiple objectives.

As the voice of the profession in Canada, the CSLA – in collaboration with its provincial and territorial component organizations – is dedicated to advancing the art, the science, and the practice of landscape architecture. As such it remains an advocate for its members on a wide range of issues such as urban design, urban renewal, sustainable development, human health and well-being, climate change, cultural heritage, and social justice through site design and landscape restoration.

The CSLA understands that the current ownership group wish to develop a hotel/conference centre and residential subdivision (190 units) on this property. From The Niagara Foundation letter, the Town has designated numerous attributes of the estate – including buildings and landscape – yet much of the tree canopy has already been removed in the area slated for redevelopment. Anticipated to come before the Ontario Land Tribunal in the winter of 2024, the CSLA supports the spirit and the content of The Niagara Foundation's position.

A letter from The Niagara Foundation to Minister Clark (May 29, 2023) notes that the Rand Estate today constitutes one of the town's "most important historical landmarks." We would echo their statement that "*the unique and important heritage attributes will be lost ... without due consideration as to how this important estate can be restored and conserved*" and furthermore would express our concern about the potential loss of landscape integrity.

Landscape architects have long demonstrated their great contributions to the ecological, social and economic viability of treasured historic places in Ontario including, more recently, the iconic Ontario Place. As such, landscape architects will be vital in providing the continuity for this estate and will be instrumental in ensuring it remains an important heritage destination.

From its national perspective, the CSLA is cognizant of the challenge to create a timely and respectful redevelopment of this unique asset. The CSLA would underscore the recommendations of the study prepared by Brendan Stewart with ERA Architects (ERA) on behalf of Save Our Rand Estate (SORE), a local community association established to support responsible development within the Rand Estate. The report summarizes the research and analysis to date and concludes that both properties “*were found to meet the criteria for determining cultural heritage value under the Ontario Heritage Act.*”

The CSLA appreciates the clear articulation of the ascribed Heritage Values and physical Character Defining Attributes which communicate what remains of the original design intent and development of the estate. Therefore, the CSLA affirms that this ‘legacy’ Cultural (Heritage) Landscape should neither be overwhelmed conceptually or physically with redevelopment. We encourage the province to take a closer look at the significance of the landscape integrity of the Rand Estate and ensure the protection of its heritage values and long-established heritage character in order to maintain this treasured landmark.

The counter proposal prepared by Brooke-McIlroy for SORE (dated 3 November 2021), which offers a balanced approach and strong conservation vision meets multiple objectives: protecting significant features, achieving a sustainable level of housing, and providing public access within this valued landscape.

The CSLA Cultural Landscapes and Legacy Committee shares the opinion of The Niagara Foundation in considering the Rand Estate as a “*provincially significant heritage asset*” and would support a balanced approach to meeting the multiple objectives.

The CSLA will continue to monitor this evolving situation.

Yours Truly,



Bob Somers, MALA, SALA, OALA, FCSLA
President, CSLA



John Zvonar, OALA, FCSLA
Chair, CSLA Cultural Landscape Legacy Committee

c.c. Premier Doug Ford
Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, Niagara-on-the-Lake
SORE
CSLA Board
OALA Council
CSLA Cultural Landscapes and Legacy Committee