
Subject: Email - Communication - Michelle Aalders - Third Avenue United Church – 304 3rd Ave N - Heritage Designation Bylaw Amendment Request - C K710-60
Attachments: Letter of Concern Regarding Organ Heritage Amendment Request from St. Vincent's Church, Saskatoon_0.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>

Sent: Monday, September 18, 2023 4:29 PM

To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>

Subject: Email - Communication - Michelle Aalders - Third Avenue United Church – 304 3rd Ave N - Heritage Designation Bylaw Amendment Request - C K710-60

--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED] ---

Submitted on Monday, September 18, 2023 - 16:28

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Monday, September 18, 2023

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

Pronouns: She/her/hers

First Name: Michelle

Last Name: Aalders

Phonetic spelling of first and/or last name: Last named pronounced Allders

Email: [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED] Lynd Cres

City: Saskatoon

Province: Saskatchewan

Postal Code: S7T [REDACTED]

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Tuesday, Sept. 19th 11:30 a.m.

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: Heritage designation on organ at former Third Ave United

Comments:

I would like my letter read at the meeting.

Attachments:

September 20, 2023

Dear Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee members,

It has come to my attention that the congregation at St. Vincent's Orthodox Church (formerly Third Avenue United Church) are wanting to sell/remove the heritage-designated pipe organ. I was shocked and dismayed to learn that this was even a possibility, my understanding is that the organ's heritage status was supposed to protect this from happening.

Much of the argument from St. Vincent's Orthodox Church over whether or not the organ should indeed be designated heritage status stems from the information about modifications that have been done to the organ since its original instalment by Casavant Frères in 1913. Yes the console (or keyboard) was changed in 1950 to a Hill, Norman and Beard Console, and then again changed in 1981 to a Keates-Geissler console in 1981. However, this is merely the method in which the organ is "driven". Most of the inner workings/pipes of the organ are still original. There are 2, 468 pipes plus 39 bells on this instrument. The main wind chest is original, with some ranks of pipes being added by Beard. These modifications can be considered updates, and do not change the heritage status of the instrument. The current owners also wish to remove the façade. These are the pipes you see as you enter the church. Most would assume that these are all "fake" pipes, but the façade was installed by Casavant and it is tradition for them to have some of those as "dummy" pipes and some of them as speaking pipes. All the organists and technicians I have spoken with agree that some of these pipes would be speaking pipes.

How can it be possible that the organ is not playable? It has only been 5 years since I hosted and performed in the Farewell Concert there in 2018, along with other organists. If the blower has been removed or disconnected then it would be unplayable. And the only way for this to happen is if the owners did so, which would compromise the instrument. When a single pipe stays on after the organ is turned on this is called a cypher. It is not uncommon when the organ is not played regularly. This is something that can be addressed easily. If an organ was deemed unplayable because they experienced cyphers or had out of tune pipes, then most of the pipe organs in the city would be considered unplayable. Pipe organs are not usually tuned annually, and sometimes it is several years before tuning is addressed. We learn how to "avoid" the out of tune pipes until the tuner or technician is available to attend to it. Does the organ need work done? Yes, but it does not need to be disassembled, shipped to Quebec, nor would we need to wait 5 years or pay over a million dollars to do it. Any work that required immediate attention can be done "in-house" at the venue, with technicians brought in.

In regards to deciding whether the organ is playable or not, don't you think this should be left up to experts like organists and technicians who know more about the instrument than owners who do not even use the instrument. St. Vincent's also said they learned that the United Church obtained a quote about 8 years ago, to restore the organ and that it would likely be close to twice as much today. After speaking with the person who gave this quote, he disagreed with this statement, noting that although there have been increases in materials, there would likely be only a 20% increase from the original quote. This assessment was also done at a time when the ownership of the building was in question and we were not able to attend to it at that time. This quote was to help bring it up to high standards. It would not cost this much to make it more "playable".

The idea of selling it to the Western Development museum does not make any sense to me. They know nothing about pipe organs. They do not have the space for it. They are already storing about 20 pump organs that aren't being used. The organ at the former Third Ave United

Church was built for this space and this acoustic. It shouldn't be shipped somewhere to sit and be stored.

It has only been 2 years since St. Vincent purchased the former Third Avenue United Church, and they are already asking for the heritage status to be removed from the organ. They do not want the organ, They never did. That does not, however, negate agreements that were made. We do not know how long the current owners will own the building. The organ has been there for 110 years. They have been there for two. On behalf of the beautiful instrument in this building that we have cherished for so long, do we not think more time and thought is needed to go into this decision? I am requesting that all avenues be studied thoroughly in this decision.

Sincerely, and with deep concern,

Michelle Aalders
Former organist Third Avenue United Church 2003-2018