



NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR  
**HISTORIC TRUST**  
— est 1966 —

July 2, 2019

Mayor Danny Breen  
Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O’Leary  
Councillors Burton, Collins, Froude, Hanlon, Hickman, Jamieson, Korab, Lane, and Stapleton  
City of St. John’s  
P.O. Box 908  
St. John’s, NL A1C 5M2

Re: 43-53 Rowan Street (Churchill Square)

Dear Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor O’Leary, and Councillors Burton, Collins, Froude, Hanlon, Hickman, Jamieson, Korab, Lane, and Stapleton:

On behalf of the board and members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust, we express general support for the redevelopment of the 43–53 Rowan Street site (the former Dominion store), with concerns about the proposed design for the new building. Redevelopment of this long-vacant site will positively contribute to neighbourhood densification and will help to continue Churchill Square’s long and vibrant tradition of mixed use.

While we support the redevelopment of this site, this should not be construed as support for the proposed design. We believe that the proposed design can be improved in a number of significant ways:

- By relocating the setback of the building from the rear to the front as recommended by both the Built Heritage Experts Panel and initially by City staff. Such a change would, according to an April 10th Decision Note, be “in line with urban design principles to create a human scale of development” and “in line with Envision St. John’s,” our new municipal plan (adopted in principle). According to Committee of the Whole minutes from April 3rd the developer has already acknowledged that “from a financial perspective, [he] has no concerns with relocation.” While it was argued that there is little height consistency in the Square to begin with, outside the Terrace building - a deliberate focal point - the Square is consistently two to three storeys in height and such a setback would preserve its pedestrian-friendly character.
- By incorporating the Built Heritage Experts Panel recommendation to better respond to the heritage character of Churchill Square and Churchill Park, one of Canada’s earliest residential suburbs. Imagine if the new building incorporated elements of the surrounding neighbourhood, such architectural features derived from the apartments on

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the other side of the Square or from the original Churchill Park houses. The LUAR claims the materials of the proposed building “will be chosen to complement the existing buildings in the square” but provides no rationale (page 3).

- By respecting the place of the clocktower as a focal point for the Square. Reducing the height of the proposed building by as little as one meter would allow the tower to remain the tallest element and visual center of the Square. Other approaches, including the stepback referenced above, can also serve to reduce the apparent height of the building.
- Through collaboration between the City, the developer, potential tenants, and other stakeholders to arrive at appropriate changes that can have a minimal impact on construction costs.

A new building on this site can and should be a showpiece for the neighbourhood. A contemporary interpretation on the original Churchill Square development, rather than the current, placeless proposal, would allow the developer to achieve its goals and make a positive contribution to the densification of the neighbourhood, all while respecting and enhancing the heritage character of this unique part of St. John’s.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors  
Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust

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**PO Box 2403, St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, A1C 6E7**  
**coordinator@historictrust.ca**  
**www.historictrust.ca**