

Council should heed Pier Group's advice

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Port Hope is renowned for its heritage preservation.

It has a booming tourism industry that isn't centered around a beach or a harbour, like neighbouring Cobourg.

So what is it that draws the tourists to the downtown core?

Heritage.

Beautifully restored buildings like the Capitol Theatre bring people to the heart of the community. Almost demolished, it is now the downtown's crown jewel.

The main street features structures that have been returned to their original beauty by a combination of good owners and hard-working groups like the Local Architectural Conservancy Advisory Committee (LACAC) and the Port Hope branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO), not to mention the vision of former councils.

Imagine where Port Hope would be without the foresight of residents and groups who lobbied and fundraised to save these historical buildings. With no anchor in the downtown core like a sandy beach, and an unsightly uranium refining plant on the waterfront, the prospects of Port Hope being a draw for tourists would not be good.

So why is the current council ignoring the calls of some 300 residents — including many of the same people who saved the Capitol Theatre, and currently sit or have sat on the ACO and LACAC — when it comes to the buildings located on the pier, which are slated for demolition, after the federal government remediates them during the low-level radioactive waste clean-up?

These highly-educated, successful heritage preservationists have a history of spotting potential where others do not — must we mention the Capitol Theatre again? — and council should do more than pass their concerns off to the Harbour Commission, a private organization of councillors and two citizens which officially 'own' the harbourfront.

Just because Port Hope councillors don't see the potential in run-down buildings that currently house radioactive waste, doesn't mean there is none there.

Port Hope's history shows The Pier Group should be paid more than lip-service at council meetings.

The municipality's entire tourism industry proves as much.