

SAVE OUR SANCTUARY (S.O.S)

March 26, 2001

Bishop Richard Grecco  
Office of the Bishop  
400 Huron Church  
Windsor, Ontario  
N9C 2J9

Your Excellency,

Attached is a summary of my involvement directly and indirectly with the St. Joachim Parish. I was an active member and served on the Building Committee for 10 years. I was able to assist in decisions regarding restoration and maintenance due to my background in Construction and Engineering.

I represent a committed group of people who are willing to confirm the information enclosed if need be. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for your time and interest in this urgent matter.

We look forward to coming to alternatives to our present situation.

Sincerely,

Adrien Sylvestre  
Senior Engineering Technician, C.E.T.  
Construction Technician  
Tradesmen, Millwright presently employed  
Building Maintenance Department, Windsor Transmission Plant

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What started all this mess prior to Clustering?

London requested a building assessment report from all their churches. Clustering parishes was inevitable, however promises were made to keep our churches open.

What was the real intent on having these building reports is the question we are asking ourselves. I can speak for the St. Joachim church to the fact that we were committed to ensure ongoing restoration on an annual basis.

As a parish and building committee member for 10 years, I can tell you that we had a long-term restoration /maintenance plan dating back to 1987 to improve and restore the church.

Starting with the foundation; we had new drainage, parging, and sealing done by Leo Mailloux Construction. Had we encountered any problems with the walls, at that time, we would not have invested good money for bad. This foundation was sound and strong and situated on some very hard, solid, yellow clays a location chosen by our Grandfathers back in 1880.

From that day in 1987 we improved and restored the following:

### **Exterior**

Sidewalk, meeting room, washrooms, four new lights and posts installed, septic system, new aluminum double glazed, tinted windows, the west entrance to the basement, the fascia, overhang and eaves trough, new roof over the washroom, the roofs over the east and west sacristy entrance. Hallways were covered with a rubber membrane, bell tower floor re-surfaced, and new doors with crash bars on both east and west entrances, basement windows replaced with glass blocks. And yes, in contrast with the Avis report, there are steel lintels to support the bricks on all these windows. A wheel chair ramp equipped with railings. Asphalt was attended to by filling cracks and re-glazing.

### **Interior**

Two new furnaces (mid efficient) and two air conditioning units, equipped with humidifiers; a new hydro service panel to accommodate the existing and future hydro needs. In the basement steel stud walls covered with drywall formed rooms to section the furnace room, the kitchen, and storage areas. Adam Insulation installed a new suspended fire rated ceiling. The furnace room was also done and all met the fire code requirements, as per discussions with the building inspector. Part of the east entrance floor was lowered to gain headroom. Emergency lighting was installed in the basement, handrails at both east and west basement entrances, a new solid wood door and glass block skylight installed at the west basement entrance to seal the lobby, new sump pumps and water backup pumps installed, the whole basement was painted, floor, walls and ceiling prior to the installation of the suspended ceiling and I can add to this that everything was scraped and cleaned and this alone was quite an undertaking by Sun Parlour painting. New kitchen : long time volunteer, Marcel Belisle, made cabinets.

Upstairs on the main floor we renovated the Sanctuary, removed the panelling installed in the 60's and exposed the original raised panel wood structure. We also painted the entire walls in the Sanctuary and removed the existing rug to replace it with a new red carpet. This was all volunteer work done by the Marcel Guilbeault family, Leo Marcel Jr. Paul and Denis Lassaline. We had new sound system installed, purchased a smaller organ (more practical and easier to play).

The parish spent over \$ 100,000.00 and we did it by many hours of running around getting estimates to pursue the best method for our purpose and the least costly. Also many hours of volunteer work went into these projects including the many hours of fundraising done by the parishioners.

We had looked into replacing some of the broken stain glass windows, realizing that they are an etched design and it would be very difficult to match, but we decided that the little amount of broken panes would not interfere, and this was purely cosmetic so we put it off to allow us to address the more important items.

The plaster was always a concern to us. So back in 1989-90 we contacted a contractor – plaster tradesman for inspection. The ceiling was a concern and it should be noted that there was nothing loose but we should consider doing something in the near future because of its age. Later we had another plasterer who had redone the Tilbury church utilizing a different method. He would go along and remove the loose plaster or what was not sound, fill the hole with Dura-bond 90, and cover the whole surface with a mesh type canvas blanket glued to the existing wall. This would give it strength and would be a paintable surface. Unfortunately he only worked on @ time and material condition and could not submit a ball park figure.

Then we started looking at the roof and found that it was installed in 1933 according to our centennial book. We shifted our concentration to the roof because if we were to spend a large amount of money on the ceiling and walls inside, just to find out later that we had a water problem with insufficient funds, it could be a waste of money and time.

We obtained estimates for a new roof or covering the existing one with the same method of the past. All discussions were with Chevalier Engineering. Weight was a big factor so this ruled out asphalt shingles and plywood. The surface was and still is very flat with no signs of sagging, so we looked at a new steel surface. L & P Roofing gave us an estimate of \$39,840 (please see attached estimate).

We had one point of concern, which was all the exposed screws, but we discovered in 1999 that there is a new style, (hidden fastening- Heritage Series - example attached) by Ideal Roofing. This new style would meet the standards we set out to meet in 1997 as far as weight, looks, and durability.

## Plaster

We discovered through discussions that the method Chevalier suggested with the, 1/4" flexible drywall would be the best method to finish the interior. We were never able to get to that point. In September Father Simard wanted the Sanctuary re-done. We lowered the floor, and installed new carpeting. Due to this request, our attention was diverted from a more pressing issue - the ceiling and roof.

You can very well see that the parishioners were in control of restoration and keeping this beautiful building in good repair. We were on our way to finish the major points of concern. The funds were there and the will of the people was clearly demonstrated when collections went up 30% when we started renovating, back in 1988. Different committees were formed, we even had elections for councils, and more people were attending mass. With Father Bastien we revived the French choir, which stayed together right up until the French mass was eliminated..

This is what we are facing today.

There were two reports done. One in 1997 by Chevalier Engineering Assoc. Ltd. because his price was lower. As a committee, we discussed all the points with Mr. Chevalier and Gary Minall on August 29, 1997. A few weeks later Father Simard informed me that this report was not acceptable by London because Mr. Chevalier was an engineer not an architect. They failed to notice that he has associates!

In 1999 London ruled that any church older than-50 years must have a report by Allan Avis Architect and assume the cost. The report was done and is open to discussion among the building committee of the day. There are many concerns about the contents of the Allan Avis Report report. Please refer to supplemental report for this.

We question the Report on:

- (1) Historically, the Diocese of London has always required 2 estimates. The A.A. report provided only one.
- (2) Companies from London, Rockwood Ontario, Woodstock and Goderich that would be contracted to do the work. According to their estimate costs are substantially higher due to lodging and travel,
- (3) Mr Bob Peterman is a consulting engineer. What was so different from our consulting engineer - Chevalier Engineering and Associates?

Had the building committee been given the opportunity to discuss the report with Avis beforehand, we feel that their recommendations would not have been as extensive and the parishioners would have voted differently.

Why, you ask?

Because the many areas of concern would be discussed in a broader context, i.e. what had been done already, what is phased to be done and with whom, and what can be done by local parishioners for a substantially lower price. Why I ask was it appropriate, and even relied upon for the past 120 years, that St. Joachim rely on their caring, talented parishioners to tend to these matters? Now, not in keeping with the past, when the agenda is quite different, we are sidestepped, This is unconscionable!

I am convinced that for such a high price tag, we should have been able to get a third opinion. I discovered that the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) will provide this service for a nominal fee.

London rejected the Chevalier report and we are not happy with the Allan Avis report. An unbiased third report will solve many problems. Will you, Bishop, allow the Architectural

Conservancy of Ontario to proceed with their report?

Please understand that I require to meet and verbally elaborate on the many points contained herein, and the many left unmentioned, so as to convince you of the contradictions between reports, and the mistreatment St. Joachim has undergone.

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NOTE:

MR SYLVESTRE AND COLLEAGUES MADE A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE RESTORATION COSTS OF ST-JOACHIM AND ANNONCIATION BUILDINGS PRESENTED IN THE AVIS REPORT.

THEY SHOWED THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE TO REDUCE THOSE COSTS BY MORE THAN \$2 300 000, ESSENTIALLY BY USING ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES (i.e : purchasing and reselling scaffolding rather than renting at \$145 000; removing the unused chimney during roof repair rather than repairing it...etc)

THE TABLES SHOWING THE BREAKDOWN OF THOSE SAVINGS ARE NOT AVAILABLE IN A FORMAT FOR DISPLAY ON THIS WEBSITE (at this time, because of software...and skill level deficiencies!).