

Demolition crews survey Pickering federal lands

Tenders to be accepted for scheduled demolitions

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PICKERING -- The fight to salvage several heritage buildings in Pickering continues as demolition crews began surveying sites on the Pickering federal lands prior to submitting tenders.

A request for proposals for the completion of demolitions was posted by Transport Canada on Aug. 3 and proposals will be accepted until Monday, Aug. 22. As a first step in the process, Transport Canada has arranged for potential contractors to visit the demolition sites in order to provide an estimate.

"Transport Canada is proceeding with its proposed 2011 demolition program to eliminate vacant structures on the Pickering lands site that pose health and safety risks to the public and first responders, including vacant structures within the community of Brougham," said Paula Fairfax, a spokeswoman for Transport Canada, in an e-mail.

"Transport Canada is working closely with the City of Pickering officials to allow access to properties slated for demolition to research, document and determine whether there are elements of value that need to be recorded, or that City staff would like to retrieve for other uses."

An agreement is in place that will allow City officials to conduct heritage inspections and document 17 homes deemed to have heritage significance during the week of Aug. 15. Transport Canada has given the City the opportunity to lease any buildings they may want to save, with the stipulation that the City would be responsible for any repair and maintenance costs and that the buildings may only be leased to third parties for non-residential purposes.

A deadline of Sept. 15 was set for the City to decide on what to do about the properties. A previous request from the City for funding from Transport Canada to conduct heritage surveys of the homes slated for demolition was denied.

Mary Delaney, a member of Land Over Landings, which is advocating for the federal lands to be turned into a land trust and preserved in perpetuity, was disappointed to see the crews surveying sites in Brougham that she said hold important heritage value.

"It really brings us up short," Ms. Delaney said of seeing the crews on site,

noting she would especially like to see a stone house at 4355 Brock Road saved.

"It catches your breath because it makes it very real. This huge, long list of scheduled demolitions has been floating around for many months now and the deadline is coming up. It's very distressing because once these heritage buildings are gone, they're gone forever. And once farmland is paved over, it's also gone forever. You can't go back."

There are currently 52 structures listed for demolition, 24 of which are listed on the Pickering Heritage Register. Ms. Fairfax said that demolitions are expected to begin shortly after a tender is awarded, and that all demolitions are scheduled to be completed by March 31, 2012.