

July 23, 2021

David Schulz, BURPI
Planner
Planning and Development Department
City of Port Colborne
66 Charlotte Street
Port Colborne ON L3K 3C8

Re: Window Replacement, Former Imperial Bank of Canada Building,
212-214 West Street

Dear Sir:

The former Imperial Bank of Canada building at 212-214 West Street, designated in 1983 under bylaw 1314/7/83 as a building of architectural and historical value and interest, is a treasured architectural gem unique not just in Port Colborne but in all of Niagara for its Beaux Arts classical exterior executed in white terra cotta. The building has been owned by Lester Shoalts Limited since prior to its designation, and both the building and the City have benefitted from the careful stewardship of this gem in its prominent location facing busy West Street and the canal. Unfortunately, even with regular maintenance, the windows in the east and south facades of the building have deteriorated to the point where they must be replaced.

The 1983 designation bylaw, like most bylaws of the time, does not meet the standard for designation bylaws in Ontario in that it does not actually include a list of the heritage attributes of the property that would be covered by the designation. The bylaw does include a statement of the reasons for designation, as it should, which includes a description of the building and the statement that “the repeated curve-headed windows provide a distinctive rhythm” and it is clear that the fenestration is a large part of the appeal and heritage value of the facades.

The windows that are presently in the building were installed two years before the building was designated; they are not the original windows. They were made to be sympathetic to the style of the building and the original windows but they were not direct copies. In keeping with this spirit, but in the interest of longevity, we are proposing to replace the windows with new units with custom-made commercial aluminum frames, prefinished in a colour matching the existing wood frames. The appearance will be virtually identical to what exists now, with plain, unobtrusive frames and large, unbroken lights. The original curved heads were filled with blank panels when the building was restored, to conceal the interior ceiling lines. The new windows will maintain this configuration, and the ground floor transoms with obscured glass will also be maintained. The appearance of the building will be unchanged.

Although 40 years is a reasonable lifespan for the previous windows, they have had a lot of maintenance and repairs in that time and we can anticipate much better performance from the new windows. Appended are photographs showing the existing windows and some details of their present condition. Cross-sections of the proposed frames are also appended.

The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada is the defining document for work of this nature on our built heritage. The Guidelines deal extensively with conservation, preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation, and they deal specifically with the issue of replacing non-heritage fabric such as these windows. The guidelines also deal with sustainability, energy efficiency, and durability and longevity of repairs and replacements. The issue of using different materials than original is dealt with and sanctioned where appropriate; we have used this strategy in other locations such as Dundurn Castle National Historic Site in Hamilton. Our proposed approach to replacing the windows in 212-214 West Street is in conformance with the Guidelines.

We trust that you can support our request to City Council for permission to carry out this work, which will contribute to the longevity of this valuable heritage asset in downtown Port Colborne. I have had extensive experience in restoring and replacing windows in heritage buildings, including several National Historic Sites where I was hired specifically to deal with the windows. These have included Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate in Guelph, Fredericton City Hall in New Brunswick, Sir Howard Douglas Hall at the University of New Brunswick, and Ruthven Park in Cayuga. I have appended a brief CV and list of previous heritage projects for reference. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Mark Shoalts, P.Eng., CAHP



South façade, 212-214 West Street



East façade, 212-214 West Street



Awl with 5" blade inserted into window sill, south facade



Awl inserted into window sill, east façade



Deteriorated corner of frame



Failing horizontal mullion

ALUMICOR COMMERCIAL WINDOW SYSTEM

