

## There Are Better Places for Murals

The town is hoping to install a number of murals in the downtown of Aurora.

They are hoping to paint one on the retaining wall in front of the church at sidewalk level, from Maple to Catherine Streets. We first heard about this through a newspaper report about a year ago. We contacted the mayor's office at that time to express our concern about the location. We met with the mayor on site to discuss our concerns. Shortly after we heard that the planning meeting that we had been invited to in order to discuss this issue had been cancelled. We presumed this was the end of the issue. Recently we were invited to a meeting to discuss making a choice of what design would be used in front of the church. Fr. Frank and Sandra had a phone conversation with the mayor on Friday the fourth of June in the morning. He then called Sandra in the afternoon for another conversation. In both conversations we made it clear that our preference is to not have a mural on the retaining wall in front of the church.

Let us be clear in this time of pandemic and as we wrestle with our historical relationship with indigenous people, having this distraction literally on our doorstep is an annoyance more than anything.

This is not a sectarian issue. It is not secular people picking on Catholics or vice versa. The mayor said that he had heard so little from our parish that he presumed that it must not be a problem. I explained that we had not brought this up for discussion over the last year in the parish as it appeared to have been put to rest. The mayor has said that he is eager to hear from you by phone so we will provide that information plus email contacts for him and the other members of council.

There also may be those Catholics who think this is a fabulous idea, their voice in the mix is valuable as well.

Why is the mural on the retaining wall problematic?

- 1) Our Lady of Grace is an ecclesial institution. It is used for many solemn events in the life of the people of Aurora and surrounding districts. The church grounds and exterior should reflect this. The inclusion of a mural specifically here is poor planning. There are any number of municipal buildings in town where murals can be painted.
- 2) We spent over a million dollars as a parish, those who live in Aurora and those who live in the surrounding district, creating an ambience that reflects that we are in the historic part of town as we were directed to by the town. They then come in and want to put a multicoloured mural in front of the church. We disagree with the mayor in that he feels that only the input of those who live in Aurora is significant. For many people in Aurora, Our Lady of Grace is sacred space, but it is as well for those who may come from adjoining municipalities. They have shared in the burden of renewing this property.

- 3) It seems that Hilary House, the great work done on Desjardin building directly across from the church and the renewal of Our Lady of Grace more than creates a sense that you are entering the historic downtown of Aurora. A multicolored mural stretching the length of the church property will take away from that ambience that we were led to believe was the goal in this area of town.

Three others points;

- 1) The belief seems to be that since the retaining wall belongs to the town, they can pretty much do whatever they want and, in the end, it really is not our concern. Our involvement in this issue arises from our initiative, not from out-reach from the town seeking our consultation.
- 2) We were reminded that in providing infrastructure the town often needs to make decisions that those in the immediate neighbourhood are displeased with. Murals are not infrastructure.
- 3) For those who reach out to the mayor and the members of council the cost of this effort is a relevant concern.

In the end, the issue for the parish is not what they place there, rather that they leave it alone beyond providing proper maintenance. We encourage you to share this with family and friends in Aurora.

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[Office of The Mayor Email Link](#)

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