

Femi Adegeye
Senior City Planner City of Regina
2476 Victoria Avenue Regina, SK S4P 3C8

Dear Mr. Adegeye,

I am writing this letter to confirm that I spoke with Ms. Rosanne Hill Blaisdell of Harvard/Hill Companies on August 31st, 2021 to discuss the possible demolition of the building at 1863 Cornwall Street in Regina and the impact said demolition might potentially have on the historical significance to the site in relation to Louis Riel.

As the City of Regina is aware, 1863 Cornwall Street is the former site of Regina's first Catholic Church, St. Mary's, which was used as a temporary repository of the body of Louis Riel after his execution at the RCMP barracks on Dewdney Avenue. A French Canadian sympathetic to Riel's cause whose name was Pascal Bonneau, received permission from the parish priest to temporarily bury Riel's body within the church to prevent vandals from desecrating his body. The body remained in the church until a train arrived to return it to its final resting place in the St. Boniface cemetery in Winnipeg.

St. Mary's Church was eventually torn down and the parish relocated to the renamed 'Blessed Sacrament' Church on Scarth Street which still stands. The site where St. Mary's once stood was eventually redeveloped into its current form. On the wall outside of the current building at 1863 Cornwall is a small plaque which relays a short history of the site and of the temporary burial of Louis Riel.

I write this letter not as a political representative of the Metis Nation-Saskatchewan, but rather as a historian, instructor of Metis Studies at the University of Regina, Michif Cultural Carrier and long-time resident of the City of Regina (37 years). Every year I take my students on a 'Louis Riel' downtown tour that highlights significant events in Riel's short life including the plaque at 1863 Cornwall. My students and I understand that the importance of Riel's life and the significance of his story within Regina's history is best remembered by the re-telling and researching of that history and not necessarily by a building that sits on the site of another building that played a role in that history. The current building has absolutely zero significance to Riel's life or the history that surrounds the events of his execution. While the site is significant, the building is not. There are other important sites regarding Riel within Regina that seemingly offer very little recognition of that important history (ie. RCMP Depot, Federal Building on Victoria and Scarth St.) so it seems to me to be a bit misdirected to be concerned about a building that had zero significance to Riel's life when others currently exist without a truthful re-telling of this important history.

As a Metis citizen and a historian, I care very little about what happens to the building at 1863 Cornwall. I do however care that we continue to tell Riel's story in accurate ways that reflect both a Metis and settler-Canadian interpretation of that history. When I spoke to Ms. Hill Baisdell, she had indicated that the developer would commit to either keeping the current informational plaque or the redesigning of an updated plaque. Either of these options would allow me to continue to take my students to the site and engage in a re-telling of the history of Riel's execution and his temporary placement in a building that was long ago torn down. If this information continues to be visible and accessible to the general public, I see no need to be concerned about the preservation of the current building as it relates to Metis history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Fayant'.

Russell Fayant, M.Ed
Faculty, SUNTEP Regina
University of Regina