SÉNAT
L'honorable Raymonde Gagné, C.M., O.M.
Sénatrice - Manitoba

SENATE
The Honourable Raymonde Gagné, C.M., O.M.
Senator - Manitoba

CANADA

February 2, 2022

Executive Policy Committee
City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 1B9

Dear Committee Members,

I support the nomination of 227 Provencher Boulevard to be added to the Historical Resources list of the City of Winnipeg.

My career in public service has been primarily devoted to safeguarding French language rights for Manitobans and Canadians. Our identities, our unique ways of seeing the world, our stories, are inseparable from the language in which they are spoken. The same goes for our architecture.

Having lived in Saint Boniface for nearly 50 years now, when walking the streets of my neighbourhood, these buildings help us remember who we are. They evoke memories, a sense of belonging but also a sense of togetherness and of the history that binds us as a francophone community in Manitoba. The heritage locations on Provencher Boulevard are integral to our Franco-Manitoban culture.

In his brief, internationally renowned architect, and Saint Boniface native, Étienne Gaboury explains the inspiration behind his modern prairie architecture. After reading it, I came to realize how these heritage sites not only contribute to our civic lives, they connect us to our physical geography and our economic heritage. The Police Station echoes the prairie grain elevators, the Health Unit's skylights microcosms of our sweeping prairie sky, and the scale of these Brutalist structures are fitted to complement the homes the people of Saint Boniface inhabit. This architecture gives our community a sense of proportion and celebrates the egalitarian spirit that infused the modernist aesthetic.

The City of Winnipeg has already designated the Health Unit as a heritage site, and we must now do the same for the Police Station. We must keep this architectural flow intact and let the City of Winnipeg put in place the standards that will keep this architectural design alive for future generations.

Reflecting on the influence architecture had on British parliamentary democracy, Winston Churchill noted how "we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us". Of course, the same can be said of our civic lives. For over half a century, 227 Provencher Boulevard has shaped our lives and we must put the safeguards in place so it can continue to shape us long into the future.

Sincerely,

Raymonde Gagné

Raymonde Gagné, Non-affiliated Senator
(Manitoba)

CC: Mathieu Allard, City Councillor for Saint Boniface