

STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF THE ORIGINAL JCCC BUILDING AT 123 WYNFORD DRIVE

Toronto, ON – February 27, 2023 – The Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre understands the extraordinary symbolic and architectural importance of Raymond Moriyama’s original JCCC building at 123 Wynford Drive.

The original building represents decades of happy memories for members of the Japanese Canadian community and generations of the broader community that experienced their first taste of Japanese culture on the premises. The building is a magnificent example of Canadian modern architecture, but more importantly, the heritage value is that it is one of the launching pads, if not *the* launching pad, of a Canadian experiment called multiculturalism; even before there was such a thing as Canadian multiculturalism.

On a sunny afternoon in June 1964, Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson stood at the podium at the entrance of the then brand-new building and officially opened the JCCC before hundreds of spectators, stating:

“For me, this centre is a reminder of the multi-racial heritage on which our nation is being built, surely and strongly. It is a new living monument to the fact that our Canadian purpose which seeks a Canadian identity, need not and does not mean a loss of the traditions and cultures, the arts and skills brought to Canada from other lands.”

“...action taken by the Canadian government, though taken under the strains and fears and pressures of War – was a black mark against Canada’s traditional fairness and devotion to the principles of human rights.”

“I hope that the Centre will serve as a reminder to future generations of Japanese Canadians that theirs is an abundant heritage and a proud tradition.”

In a perfect world the building would remain untouched as a living tribute to the sacrifices, perseverance and determination of the Japanese Canadian community to support the JCCC’s motto of *Friendship Through Culture* to ultimately build a better post-War Canada. The Centre continues to operate with that same motto 60 years later.

When the JCCC sold the building in 2001 the community understood the new owner planned to keep the building intact, which was an ideal outcome at that time. The wider community, as well as guardians of the Toronto architectural legacy that the building represents, are now best positioned to communicate the importance of the building to city planners and the current owners of the property. The JCCC will ensure that all concerned with the redevelopment of the original building are fully aware of the importance of the building to the history of Canada and to the history of Canadian multiculturalism.

As an organization it saddens us to think that the original home of the JCCC is in jeopardy but we continue to work diligently to honour and to expand the reach of the legacy and the vibrant vision of the



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founders through our on-going programs and festivals, heritage initiatives, exhibitions and gathering of oral histories at the current home of the JCCC at 6 Garamond Court.

About the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre

Founded in 1963 with the motto *Friendship Through Culture*, the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC) is a not-for-profit organization that seeks to enrich lives globally through the celebration of Japanese culture and Japanese Canadian heritage.

The JCCC:

- Serves 5,200 members, almost half of which are of non-Japanese ancestry.
- Attracts over 210,000 visitors to its festivals, concerts, martial arts tournaments and special events annually.
- Welcomes more than 15,000 students from the Greater Toronto Area and beyond visit the JCCC each year to participate in seminars on Japanese history, culture, and the Japanese Canadian experience.

The JCCC's mission is *to promote understanding, inclusion, and friendship by sharing the Japanese Canadian experience and traditional and contemporary Japanese culture*. In executing our mission, we take pride in our heritage, creating a lasting tribute to the unique history and contributions of past generations; we bridge generations as the means for the continuing evolution of our community and we demonstrate the importance of tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity for the benefit of all Canadians.

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