



UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER

January 24, 2025

City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor and members of the City Council,

I am writing to you on behalf of my family, the parish council, and the parishioners of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Ukrainian Catholic Church regarding the critical situation we face with the parish house, which holds a heritage designation. As you may be aware, the building was the site of a devastating arson attack on April 20, 2022. The attack not only caused significant physical damage to the structure but also left lasting emotional scars on our community, especially on me as the parish priest, my wife, and our three young daughters. One of my daughters sustained injuries requiring surgery, and my entire family continues to cope with the psychological trauma that accompanied this violent event. The ripple effect of this tragedy has been felt not only by my family but also by our parish members and the broader neighborhood. The emotional toll has been heavy, and the need for healing is unquestionable.

The impact of the fire has been deeply felt by our parish community. We have worked tirelessly to support one another in the wake of this event, but the continued presence of the abandoned parish house has become an ongoing source of distress. For nearly three years, this structure has remained standing as a constant reminder of the trauma we experienced. It has become an eyesore, a symbol of what nearly occurred, and a barrier to our ability to fully heal and move forward.

In addition to its emotional impact, the condition of the house has raised serious safety concerns. The building, left abandoned, has attracted unwanted occupants, further increasing the risk to both the church and the surrounding neighborhood. The house is no longer secure, and its deteriorating state has become a growing concern for the parish and community. We are in urgent need of a solution that allows us to move forward and provides healing for everyone involved—both those directly impacted by the fire and the wider parish and neighborhood.

We believe the best path forward involves the demolition of the parish house, which would clear the site and make way for new development. We are pleased to note that there is significant support from our neighbors for this course of action and we received letters of support. The new development would provide much-needed housing in the area, contribute to the overall revitalization of the neighborhood, and enhance security for both the church and the surrounding community. The removal of the parish house would not only allow us to heal but would also create a safer, more positive environment for all.

We fully respect the heritage status of the parish house and the importance of preserving Victoria's historical fabric. We are working with a heritage consultant to ensure that the history of the house will be honored. However, given the tragic events of the past and the current state of the building, we respectfully request the City's approval for the demolition of the house. We believe that this is the only way to truly move forward in a way that honours both our past and our future.

Our community is eager to move past this painful chapter and look toward a brighter future, and we hope to work collaboratively with the City of Victoria to find a solution that benefits all. We are requesting the Mayor and members of the Council to remove the house from the Heritage Registry.

Thank you for your time, understanding, and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yuriy Vyshnevskyy', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Rev. Yuriy Vyshnevskyy

Pastor

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Ukrainian Catholic Church