

Saving a historic treasure, St. Peter's Church

August 8, 2022, Cobourg, ON - For more than a century, the bells of St. Peter's Church (SPC) have sounded through Cobourg's historic downtown, marking occasions as monumental as the end of World Wars I and II. But since 2021, they have remained silent, tucked away in a crumbling bell tower that's in desperate need of repair. A new fundraising campaign aims to preserve this historic building and make the bells ring again.

"First built in 1818, SPC is one of our town's oldest and most historically significant buildings," says Peter Delanty, former mayor of Cobourg who heads the fundraising committee. "It's been a pillar of Cobourg's heritage and community life for more than two centuries. Now, without critical repairs and restoration work on the bell tower, the roof and the ceiling, that heritage is at risk of being lost."

It's [estimated](#) that more than 20 per cent of Canada's built heritage was lost between 1970 and 2000. The campaign, [Preserving the Past for a Brighter Future](#), wants to prevent SPC from sharing in that fate and is calling on the community to support the iconic space. On August 25th, the public is invited to a [Heritage Dinner at the Docks](#), hosted at the Cobourg Yacht Club, in support of the campaign.

"From its very beginning, SPC has played a key role in our town's history. In fact, the first rector of the parish had a hand in giving Cobourg its current name," says Randy Barber, vice-president of the Cobourg and District Historical Society and fundraising committee. "The building we see today was designed by famed Ontario architect, Kivas Tully, who also built Victoria Hall and advised on the building of Queen's Park."



With parts of the historic building already shuttered, SPC is in urgent need of repair to maintain its role as a pillar of Cobourg's heritage.



Meal and safe space programs are growing in response to increasing need in the community.

The building's rich history has made it a key tourist attraction, drawing visitors to Cobourg's East Heritage Conservation District. But its value lies just as much in the present as it does in the past.

"SPC is a vital hub and a safe space for Cobourg's most vulnerable and marginalized populations," says Patricia Perkin, SPC warden and outreach volunteer. "We use this space for our weekly meal and outreach programs, which have continued to grow in response to increasing pressures placed on people by the COVID-19 pandemic."

Last year, in partnership with Transition House Shelter, SPC opened a warming centre – the only one in Cobourg.

“SPC truly is a treasure in our community, one that we can’t afford to lose,” adds Delanty. In addition to the heritage dinner event, donations for the Preserving the Past for a Brighter Future campaign can be made through the [Canada Helps website](#). “Whether it’s \$1 or \$100, every little bit will help make the bells ring out again.”

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