

Do the Two Solitudes extend into the realm of heritage conservation? Québec and Ontario each have their own tools that municipalities can use to protect historic properties, yet little research has been done to compare them. Ontario's Heritage Conservations Districts are designed specifically to provide a comprehensive plan to guide the growth of heritage neighbourhoods or areas within a City. Québec's laws are not as straightforward, but does that mean *La Belle Province's* historic towns and neighbourhoods are more vulnerable? Would they benefit from having the option to create HCDs? This report studies the case of the City of Westmount, known traditionally as a bastion of Anglophone wealth on Montréal Island, which resulted in one of the most architecturally stunning collection of historic buildings in Canada.

To determine the effectiveness of Westmount's regulatory package compared to what is possible in Ontario, the study created a checklist using the elements needed for an ideal HCD Plan as outlined in the Ontario Heritage Toolkit, published by that province's Ministry of Culture. The theoretical comparison showed that Westmount's bylaws, led by its Site Planning and Architectural Integration Programme, manage to cover approximately the same scope and to properly protect its built heritage. Notably, Westmount provides clear objectives, detailed design guidelines and well-defined characteristics for the various "Character Areas" dividing the City.

However, it was necessary to conduct key informant interviews to establish if what worked on paper would be as effective in practice. These interviews revealed that there were some weaknesses with the package. However, these concerns centred mostly on these bylaws being excessively stringent. Specifically, the application process for permits to work on heritage buildings was seen as long and involved, the guidelines were sometimes confusing, and there were few alterations that were permitted to go on without clearance from the City.

The interviews also uncovered that there were worries over the distribution of power among stakeholders. There were disagreements over the interplay between the City Council and its Planning Advisory Committee, composed of architects and planners, regarding permit approvals. All respondents realised the need for better public education, involvement and consultation. This is all the more important

because many have noticed some residents tending towards more resentment and wilful disobedience of the regulations, bolstered by deep pockets, impatience, and less concern for the common good. With this in mind, there were questions over the role of the City's long-standing citizen advocacy group, the Westmount Municipal Association, in helping protect built heritage.

The report nonetheless finds that these weaknesses and concerns do not significantly weaken the strength of Westmount's bylaws, and that there is no evidence that the City would be better off if it were to designate itself a Heritage Character district. There are possible improvements to be made, however, such as making the system more user-friendly and engaging the citizenry. The study acknowledges that a lack of quantifiable data and the limited scope of a paper this size reduce the resilience of the conclusions therein.