

## WITNESS STATEMENT OF CONNIE SHAW

My name is Connie Shaw. I am Roman Catholic, a Commissioned Minister in my Church, and a Chaplain in Corrections (for 25 years). I wish to express my concern to the proposed large commercial development on the northwest corner of Woodlawn and Woolwich Street in Guelph, Ontario. This development, near the Ignatius Jesuit Centre, would significantly impact on my practice of religion on that site.

I have been visiting the Ignatius Jesuit Centre for 35 years. I have attended retreats there (special time of prayer and discernment), from a few days to forty days. I have attended workshops, such as psychotherapeutic growth, seminars and talks, and weekend gatherings of special Communities. I have also attended the site regularly across the years for Spiritual Direction. For many years there was a Farm Community there (a Larche Home) for adults with special Emotional or Psychological needs. I have referred a number of my inmates (from Guelph Correctional Centre) there. I as a Guelphite also frequently attended that community to assist and for prayer.

Because of my involvement at Ignatius, I have been able to minister in a variety of prisons for over 25 years. Because of my growth in faith and leadership abilities (enabled by this Centre) I also have been very active in a number of Churches and City Organizations, including two health organizations, one of which I founded over ten years ago.

As a Roman Catholic, the main source of my practice is Scripture (the Bible) and teaching received in Prayer (as at Worship) and in personal prayer. To quote just two references from the Old and New Testament - "Be still and know that I am God" and "Come away to a quiet place" and pray. My faith teaches to know Jesus, to know God (through prayer) and to take that knowledge and faith practice of love and service to others. In other words I am sent forth, then I am called back, to return continually to that quiet, that knowledge/prayer, to be renewed.

In all these activities, goals and life works the Jesuit Centre has been a source of strength, guidance and renewal.

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The Ignatius Centre is a place of quiet. It is removed from the noise and demands of daily life. In the quiet, one can get in touch with one's inner self and hear the Lord's message in the heart. There is quiet in the house, the Chapel and the grounds. Walking is an essential activity, a part of the process. There is healing and centering in nature, the water, the animals, the birds, plants and the trees. It extends and further develops the meditative prayer and the learning. In the cemeteries there is quiet to reflect on the mysteries of life and death, of my own and others. I know a number of people in each of the two cemeteries and often visit. I almost always see others in the cemetery, fixing a gravesite, standing quietly and sometimes in tears.

Ignatius is a unique Centre, I have visited many other retreat centers, but none can compare to the expanse and opportunities with the land offered there.

Now imagine the noise of large trucks zooming by. The beeps of a truck backing up, the slamming of large doors on trucks and buildings, the chatter and yells of people, the activity of the comings and goings. All of it is distracting and disrupting, in many ways preventing the quiet and peace needed. The proposed large commercial center will be very near the southern edge of the Retreat Centre and the Cemetery and directly across from the other Cemetery. The Mausoleum is a stone's throw away from the development. There myself and many others go for Mass, for personal prayer, and for grieving. Already there are highway and business noises, further commercial development will push the noise beyond anything bearable.

Mitigation measures were suggested a few years ago. But although Wal-Mart is bound to some considerations, there is no guarantee that it will be sufficient (and I believe it will not). Noise carries. It's like saying if you can't see the truck you won't hear it. My mother lives across the road from a #400 highway. There are the sound panels/fences and some property as buffers all along the highway. We still hear the trucks! With the amount of noise expected the wildlife might also likely flee the Ignatius land.

Some pollution always follows commercial development. Here we have precious wetlands, trails, woodlands and organic farmland. Imagine the impact and loss from spills, run off from the parking lot and vehicles, and the garbage. Rich, untouched land where people go to pray, to worship God, will be greatly diminished.

Loyola Retreat Centre is an internationally recognized Centre. My experiences have been greatly enriched by people from a variety of countries and a variety of Faiths. Yes people come from all across the globe to pray and to teach others in prayer. Last December on retreat my director was from England. I have traveled in the southern States and have had people recognize Guelph because they know of the retreat center there. The associates (interns) have expressed how they have been enriched by people from a variety of countries.

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Will the world still come when the property is bordered and significantly impacted by large commercial development? I think not. The uniqueness of Ignatius will be lost.

Ignatius Jesuit Centre, and the two historic cemeteries are sacred land: from the borders of trees to the wetlands to the farmland to residences and to burial grounds. The Sacred has a value in society. All cultures and beliefs have sacred spaces and special

religious spiritual activities. They require sacred land, with all its elements of quiet, space, nature, privacy and safety.

This international Centre has existed for ninety years as a place to pray and to grow spiritually. This must be preserved. The religious rights of the hundreds who go there, need to be protected. I wish to be able to continue with my religious practices and the blessings of this Centre. Nearby large commercial development will significantly impact the Centre and the practice and expression of religious beliefs.