Re: Auchmar Estate,

To: The Clerk, Mr. Mayor, Members of Council.

Please accept this written "delegation" submission in lieu of a personal appearance. Thank you.

Auchmar Estate is a cultural asset of national, provincial and regional value. Parks Canada in a review of more than a thousand Gothic architecture sites across all of Canada gave Auchmar top rank: it combines a highly significant cultural landscape with an outstanding heritage building and is closely linked to important historical figures and events. In short, the Parks Canada report concluded: "Together, the house, outbuildings, grounds and associated history create a compelling picture of suburban estate life in mid-19th century Canada." But for the lack of a commitment on the part of the City of Hamilton to a clear and appropriate cultural management plan for the estate, Auchmar would likely have been granted National Historic Site status.

I have every confidence that the plan presented to you today by your Department of Culture will be that required plan: that it is based upon a series of careful professional research studies; that it proposes a slow but strategically-staged approach to conservation of the estate. I know that it has actively involved the local and regional community in this. The community has welcomed this initiative wholeheartedly. I understand that it includes the support of certain already-needed city functions, such as accommodation for Department of Culture facilities, and parkland. And with knowledge of a previous consultant’s report, I am confident that it proposes a workable financial plan.

Any tenant of the Auchmar Estate must understand and respect the legal covenants with the Ontario Heritage Trust. No person, group or institution has as close and respectful an association with the Trust than your Department of Culture. It has also developed an outreach with the professional architectural community and the local community that will serve it well in the conservation programme, and in developing further appropriate uses and programmes for Auchmar. This department has proven itself an ideal steward for this cultural asset.

We need to take seriously the importance of this cultural asset. At a time when city revitalization is becoming highly dependant upon a community’s cultural and heritage resources in attracting and holding a creative and innovative workforce, we neglect heritage conservation and development at the risk of economic stagnation. Auchmar Estate is a cultural resource of outstanding significance.

I urge you to support the plan of your Department of Culture for a deeply-informed, progressively-phased and community-based plan for the conservation of the Auchmar Estate.

C. Grant Head