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Housing plan for starving artists

Council approves \$2 million to convert Salvation Army building

By **JONATHAN JENKINS, QUEEN'S PARK BUREAU**

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Story

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City council approved spending about \$2 million to turn an old Salvation Army rooming house into affordable housing for artists.

"You wonder why Rob Ford is so high in the polls?" an incredulous Councillor Doug Holyday asked. "It's this kind of thing that makes the voters fed up."

The building at 450 Pape Ave. has been owned by the Salvation Army since 1930 and now sits empty.

City staff originally recommended encouraging the Salvation Army to sell it to a charity or non-profit organization to maintain its social use.

But Paula Fletcher, the local councillor, wanted to look at the city taking over the building, which is a heritage site, and converting it to affordable housing, especially for artists, which she said were some of the lowest paid workers in the city.

"We have a win-win-win here," Fletcher said. "It's an opportunity to do something very positive."

But Holyday said the funding plan Fletcher worked out was too sketchy, especially in light of cost overruns and delays at the city's Peter St. homeless shelter and similar projects.

"You can't just pull these things out of thin air," he said. "This is why we can't balance the books at the end of the year."

"The city doesn't have to run anything," Holyday said.

That brought a sharp response from Councillor Pam McConnell, who said staff was asked to reconsider its original recommendation in light of more information and approved Fletcher's idea.

"This is not an airy-fairy, done on the back of an envelope (plan)," she said. "There is a dearth of housing in this area for artists."

"To suggest that staff didn't come back with a positive report is incorrect," McConnell said.

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Come the mayoral election, we know what to do.

These idiots are going to totally destroy the city.

Rob Ford is the only choice.

Lori, August 28th 2010, 12:33am

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