



September 9, 2023

Dear Friends of Queen's House Retreat and Renewal Centre,

It is with a great deal of regret and sorrow that we are announcing the closure of Queen's House, which we are anticipating taking effect in mid to late July, 2024. This date will be confirmed in the near future. This decision has been made by the religious community who owns this centre, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The Oblates are at a time when they are needing to consolidate their ministry, and this will be done at our sister retreat centre: Star of the North in St. Albert, AB. We realize that this notice is unexpected, and many of us will be experiencing profound grief in the coming days as we allow this news to settle within us. Queen's House is a beloved, sacred space in the heart of Saskatoon, and through the virtual medium of Zoom, our community now reaches around the world.

There are many more questions than answers at this point in time, and we ask first for your prayers and for your patience. We will keep you updated as we learn more. In the meantime, we have 9+ months of exciting retreats and workshops to offer you – at the retreat centre and on zoom. We have the Gala taking place on Thursday November 23, in which we will gather to give thanks for the 20th anniversary of this annual gathering. We have the CHAS Conference coming up in October, and other very important gatherings planned in the coming months by *many* groups who gratefully rent our facility because they deeply value the holy ground of Queen's House. And we are committed to offering *Growing in Wisdom: Seeking Deeper Generativity* online beginning in February 2024, and ending in late 2025 - this is one of the gifts in offering a program solely on Zoom.

The OMI Lacombe Canada Provincial Council made this decision after a significant period of information-gathering. This process included input from retreat centre leadership and the membership of OMI Lacombe Canada. Among other factors, the Provincial Council considered its ministerial commitments in Canada and beyond, their declining membership, ageing personnel, and financial resources. The Oblates indicated that it was not an easy decision to make; the Oblates expressed an understanding that it will deeply impact staff, volunteers, and faithful supporters. OMI Lacombe Canada expressed their desire that staff be treated justly in the process of closure while working within the provincial legislative guidelines and emphasizing a fair and equitable outcome at the conclusion of their employment.

Please remember in your prayers our staff, volunteers, Advisory Board members, the Oblate priests and brothers who live locally, our local Oblate Lay Associates, and the members of the OMI Lacombe Canada Provincial Council who have carefully and prayerfully discerned this decision – this news affects us all, and we need to care for each other well.

We would ask that any questions regarding the decision to close Queen’s House be directed to the Oblate Provincial Council in Ottawa at information@omilacombe.ca or call 613-230-2225. Any messages for the staff, volunteers, and Advisory Board members can be emailed to director@queenshouse.org.

In the coming months we will have many opportunities to gather to give thanks to the Creator for the gift of Queen’s House Retreat and Renewal Centre, which has been gifted and entrusted to us for 65 years. Please watch for these opportunities in future editions of our e-newsletter, and posted on our website: www.queenshouse.org

Sincerely,

Adele Longstaff, Chair, Advisory Board for Queen’s House

Brendan Bitz, Executive Director

In a Difficult Time – a poem by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

When you can’t even pretend
to know what comes next,
when what has happened
has stripped your heart
and left you naked and unsteady,
when little seems to tether you
to the world of things, the world
of schedules, the world of the known,
when you are unable to do anything,
this is when we might learn at last
how it is we are carried by infinite love—
how we float in the hearts of others,
buoyed by their tenderness, their prayers.
How all the love we have ever given
is still present inside us,
in fact, it has become us.