

20 June 2018

The Honorable Jim Watson  
Mayor of Ottawa  
110 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

Mayor Watson,

I write with the greatest concern about the proposed addition to the Château Laurier hotel in our Capital city. The addition, a glass block, makes mockery of the Ontario Heritage Act that has designated the Château Laurier as a building of public importance and it has been recognized under Federal jurisdiction as a National Historic Site of Canada.

The proposed hotel addition, a seven story glass box, urbanistically and symbolically destroys a fundamental part of our national identity. The long glass bar structure relentlessly covers the north face of the Château, obstructing the view of the picturesque historic structure from Parliament Hill, leaving visible only unembodied spires. The intrusion of the glass box also demolishes the significant relationship between the very fine neo-Gothic architecture of the Parliament buildings and of the Château-style hotel, which when built in 1912, established a distinct Canadian 'national' style.

Similarly, the proposed glass enclosed structure almost completely hides the view of the hotel from the greensward of Major's Hill Park, and at the same time kills the view of this park from the rooms facing the greensward. Renderings of the proposed addition shows a totally mean space between it and the Château building— a miserable space termed "courtyard" —in front of the ballroom windows. Furthermore, from the Rideau Canal the addition offers only a crowded view of the Château's west wing, obliterating the rest. Needless to say the seven storey addition obliterates views from all rooms on the north side of the Château to Major's Hill Park.

Additions to historic buildings may well be of contrasting architectural language, but they cannot act as masks allowing only obstructed views of the original. Such additions must also be sympathetic in height, articulation, proportions, and refinement. The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada states:

Conserve the heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to an historic place or any related new construction. Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place.

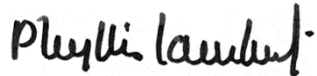
Montreal provides examples of such solutions: for example the beautiful glass enclosure of the Centre CDP Capital Caisse de Dépôt et placement du Québec, which connects late 19<sup>th</sup> century masonry buildings, creates a number of great public spaces, and has generated good new commercial construction at the edge of Old Montreal.

Clearly after four attempts to add to the superb Château Laurier, the architects have not found a viable approach. In addition to masking the distinguished 1912 and 1927 building form of one of the most important sites in Ottawa and denigrating the chateau's symbolic and historic meaning, the glass box addition is in itself a banal model of the type. Why would travelers wish to go to another tight, low ceilinged glass box hotel which they find everywhere, when they could have the excitement of experiencing spaces comparable to the Château Laurier's wonderful architectural details, unusual profile, the variety of form and space of the guest rooms, and the spacious rich lobby and public spaces.

I ask you Mayor Watson to maintain our identity and our pride in the symbols and the heritage of our National Capital. I ask you to not allow an addition to the Château Laurier that downgrades and undermines the integrity and value of this national landmark and of the great Canadian cultural landscape of which the Château Laurier is an integral part: our Parliament

buildings, Major's Hill Park, the National War Memorial, the Ottawa River, the Rideau Canal, and the National Art Gallery. I ask that the current proposal be rejected.

Respectfully yours,



Phyllis Lambert, CC, GOQ, CAL, FRAIC  
Founding Director Emeritus  
Canadian Centre for Architecture

cc:

Jan Harder, Councillor Ward 3 Barrhaven, Chair of Planning Committee,  
Mathieu Fleury, Councillor Ward 12 Rideau-Vanier  
Tobi Nussbaum, Councillor Ward 13 Rideau-Rockcliffe, Chair of Built  
Heritage Sub-Committee  
Éric Pelot, Advisory Committee Coordinator  
Melody Duffenais, Planning Committee Coordinator  
Heritage Ottawa

NB: Permit me note that I have been responsible for the revision of Architectural plans and the appointment of the architect for the Seagram Building, New York City, as Director of Planning (1954-1958); architectural consultant to the Toronto Dominion Bank (1962); for the Eaton Centre, Toronto (1972); for the Canadian Centre for Architecture as consulting architect and client (1983-1989); for the Montreal Science Centre as member of the Vieux Port de Montreal (1984-2007); for the Museum of Anthropology, UBC, as Chair of the Stewardship Council of the Arthur Erickson Foundation. I also worked with Heritage Canada to assure that the atrium of the National Bank of Canada would respect the original design. I would be pleased to discuss with you and the client of the addition, architects who could respect and enhance our precious cultural landscape in the design of an addition sympathetic to great qualities of the 1912 Château Laurier.