



Ontario Association of Architects

February 11, 2015

Dear Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, NCC and Staff:

The Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) respectfully requests that the site chosen for The National Memorial to Victims of Communism be reconsidered. The OAA believes that architecture that enhances our collective cultural understanding of world events-- such as the proposed Memorial--deserves a proper place in our built environment. The proposed location of the monument does the opposite; it detracts from the prominence of the existing architectural and symbolic context and reduces the value of the existing architecture as well as the significance of the planned Memorial.

The proposed location is adjacent to the Supreme Court of Canada. This site represents the democratic values and respect for justice that is a hallmark of Canadian values. This site has long been earmarked for a third federal justice building in order to complete the triad consisting of The Supreme Court of Canada designed by Ernest Cormier and the Justice Building, designed by Burritt and Horwood Architects.

The Long Term Vision and Plan for the Parliamentary Precinct and Judicial Precinct have evolved through extensive consultation with leading architects, urban planners and landscape architects and envisions a building, suitably scaled for its context. No monument has been planned for this location. To locate this important Memorial here would undo the efforts of the Long Term Vision and Plan and destroy the opportunity for a significant work of public architectural built form anticipated for this site.

The National Capital Commission (NCC) has long identified this site as a vital component of the "Capital Plateau." This site should be developed with a building that completes the judicial triad and is reflective of the surroundings. It is crucial to recognize the important contextual cues for this site; any built form for this site must recognize the scale, massing, materiality, detailing and relationship to the adjacent buildings.

A possible nearby site has already been suggested – the Garden of the Provinces. This site would require no changes to the design nor orientation and would have a more positive setting that would allow a contemplative environment in which to reflect on the meaning, intent and significance of this Memorial. Other possible sites may also exist and each needs to be properly assessed and considered.

Architects, urban planners, and landscape architects have raised their concerns about the site. Numerous respected media outlets have joined the Council of Canadians in recommending a second look. A member of the jury panel for the selection of the winning design has objected to the site, as has a federal court judge.

Ontario architects support the value of a long-term plan that recognizes the importance of vision and the need to complement the existing built form in a way that reflects some of the most symbolically important, and architecturally significant buildings in Canada. We support the Long Term Vision and Plan and the NCC design recommendation that this Memorial be relocated.

One of the OAA's mandates is to promote a public appreciation of architecture in the public interest; locating this Memorial on this site will detract from the public's appreciation of the existing architecture, as well as from the new Memorial.

Architecture is rooted in the human, technical and cultural context of our society. The impact of the architectural expression of this Memorial will be more deeply understood, and appreciated, in a location different from the proposed site in front of the Supreme Court. The alternate location nearby has many merits, not the least of which is reducing the conflict and contention around the current site selection. In a democratic society, elected officials must acknowledge the sound of the public voice. Relocating the Memorial will have a positive effect; it will reduce conflict, recognize the voice of the people, and maintain the architectural integrity of the design. These are all ideals of both a consultative process and a democratic society.

The Ontario Association of Architects is a self-regulating organization governed by the *Architects Act*, which is a statute of the Government of Ontario. The OAA's mission is to represent, regulate, support and promote the profession of architecture in the interest of all Ontarians, and to lead the design and delivery of built form in the Province of Ontario. The Association represents the 3,500 architects in Ontario.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toon Dreessen', with a stylized, flowing script.

Toon Dreessen, Architect
OAA, MRAIC, AIA, LEED AP
President

Cc:

Ian Chodikoff, Allan Teramura, Maria Cook, Architecture Canada
Elsa Lam, Canadian Architect
Barry Padolsky, Shirley Blumberg, Architects