

October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019

National Capital Commission  
40 Elgin Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada, K1P 1C7

**Attention: Marc Seaman, Chairperson, Tobi Nussbaum, Chief Executive Officer, and all members of the NCC Board of Directors**

**RE: REQUEST FOR THE INTERVENTION OF THE NCC ON THE PROPOSED DESIGN OF THE CHÂTEAU LAURIER ADDITION**

We the undersigned, request that the National Capital Commission ('NCC') use its moral and statutory authority under the *National Capital Act* ('NCA') to intervene and cause the owner of the Château Laurier to submit a substantially different design for the proposed Château Laurier addition: a design that is compatible with the heritage character of the Château Laurier National Historic Site and that is in accordance with the nature and Picturesque character of the national landscape in which are set the highest symbols of our democracy, Parliament Hill and the Supreme Court of Canada.

The authority granted to the NCC under the NCA Section 10 (2) (i), clearly provides it with the powers necessary to intervene:

**"The objects and purposes of the Commission are to ... assist in the development, conservation and improvement of the National Capital Region in order that the nature and character of the seat of the Government of Canada may be in accordance with its national significance.**

**(i) The Commission may, for the purposes of this Act, generally, do and authorize such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the objects and purposes of the Commission and the exercise of its powers."**<sup>1</sup>

We hold that the NCC is in an excellent position to negotiate a new design because the Château Laurier addition is surrounded by NCC lands and easements.

We hold that, notwithstanding the obtainment of a Heritage Permit and Site Plan Control approval from the City of Ottawa, the current design (Version 5) is

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<sup>1</sup> *National Capital Act* Objects, Purposes, Powers 10 (2) (i) <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/n-4/page-2.html>

architecturally incompatible with the heritage character of the Château Laurier National Historic Site, and demonstrably so. (see Appendix C).

We hold that the proposed design detracts from, rather than enhances the Picturesque overlaying character of the rich cultural landscape formed by: Parliament Hill, the wild escarpment, the Supreme Court of Canada, Major's Hill Park, the Ottawa Locks and Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Ottawa River Heritage waterway, Nepean Point, the Taiga landscape of the National Gallery of Canada, the Peacekeeping and Reconciliation Monument, Confederation Square National Historic Site and the National War Memorial, and the ceremonial route 'Confederation Boulevard' where the former Union Station, now the Senate of Canada Building, is the current location of the Senate of Canada Chamber.

The proposed design diminishes the experiential qualities of these memorable places captured by countless photographers, artists, visitors and carved into our national identity where the roofs and spires belong not to buildings but to the unforgettable image of this landscape 'tableau' (see Appendix A, figures 1 and 2)

Our points of view are upheld by the City of Ottawa Committee of Adjustment (CofA) in its decision of September 27, 2019, in which it refused a request for a minor variance related to the proposed addition, made by the owner, and in which the CofA states:

**“that the approval of variance (b) would allow for a new build that does not respect the landscape and character of the heritage features of the historic properties that surround the site, specifically those of the Rideau Canal, Major’s Hill Park and the Parliamentary Precinct, in contravention of the policies currently in place for compatible design and protection of views to these sites”<sup>2</sup>**

Furthermore, the proposed design significantly alters and erodes the meaning and value of the ceremonial route, Confederation Boulevard, by detracting from the Picturesque views of the Château Laurier that contribute to the Boulevard's purpose as a **"discovery route for the magnificent features and cultural landscapes of the core area"**<sup>3</sup>. The proposed design creates a significant visual and physical barrier that does not engage Major's Hill Park (see Appendix A, figures 3 and 4).

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<sup>2</sup>Committee of Adjustment for the City of Ottawa *Decision Minor Variance / Permission* File No. D08-02-19/A-00259 dated 27.09.2019 page 6

<sup>3</sup> NCC Plan for Canada's Capital 2017-2067

The NCC has upheld for many years that the views ‘in the round’ of this rich precinct were to be protected for the public good. The design of the Château Laurier addition is a detraction from the cohesive whole and is alien to the ‘sense of place’ that the NCC has spent decades nurturing in its own projects and in those of all stakeholders on both sides of the Ottawa River. It is prominent in the foreground of views where it does not contribute to the dynamic sense of place that those views reinforce.

Moreover, the proposed addition to the Château Laurier is contrary to the NCC’s *Plan for Canada’s Capital 2017-2067* (‘PFCC’):

The PFCC positions the Château Laurier, notwithstanding its private ownership, as belonging to the string of federal institutions that give meaning and value to Confederation Boulevard as it encircles the heart of the Capital<sup>4</sup>. The proposed addition does not contribute to this.

The PFCC expresses that:

**“Architecture and design are expressions of culture. The NCC will seek high-quality and inspiring design... The Capital is embellished and made more appealing by the development of places of high architectural, landscape and urban design quality that respect their surroundings and create a meaningful and memorable sense of place, beyond what a typical urban environment creates.”<sup>5</sup>**

The proposed design does not respond to the Picturesque surroundings. (see Appendix A, figures 5 and 6) It could be attached to any building anywhere, and belongs to a typical urban environment. The architecture is reminiscent of other buildings in the Ottawa landscape. (see Appendix A, figures 7 and 8)

The PFCC also makes clear that it intends to reinforce the Picturesque. It states that:

**“Beautifully designed landscapes will grace the Capital and offer numerous picturesque settings, adding to its unique character”<sup>6</sup>.**

The design of the proposed addition, in the form of a box, does not satisfy this aspiration.

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<sup>4</sup> NCC *Plan for Canada’s Capital 2017-2067*

<sup>5</sup> NCC Plan for Canada’s Capital 2017-2067 A living Culture and Heritage Page 64 <http://capital2067.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PFCC-English-complete-optimized.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> NCC Plan for Canada’s Capital 2017 to 2067 page 41

The PFCC confirms the importance of heritage to the Capital's identity. It states:

**"From the Capital's prominent landmarks - including the Parliament Buildings,...other buildings of national significance, national historic sites and the Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site - to ...picturesque ...landscapes, heritage forms a critical part of the Capital's identity."**<sup>7</sup>

The design of the addition uses an architectural mass, form and language that do not reinforce the Capital's identity.

We the undersigned, further request that the NCC use its authority under the *National Capital Act* to also review and approve a new design proposal. This authority is validated in the NCC's own Submission to the Advisory Committee on Planning Design and Realty ('ACPDR') on the Proposed Addition to the Château Laurier dated May 5, 2016, part of which is attached herein (see Appendix B) and which states in (3) and (5) the following:

### **3. Authority**

**"The Fairmont Chateau Laurier is on private lands that are not subject to the *National Capital Act*. However, the site is surrounded by NCC lands. A Transfer/Deed of Land between Canadian Pacific Hotels (CPH) and the NCC was completed in 1990.**

**Unobstructed rights described therein are associated with the existing building only, and do not provide any rights with respect to any future addition. Given the substantial scope of the work proposed, the works will require additional rights to granted by the NCC, either of a temporary nature during the construction phase, or of a longer-term nature in respect of ongoing access to the site.**

**Both would be subject to full land use and design approval process pursuant to the *National Capital Act*. In the interest of an integrated, holistic review process that would benefit from the advice of ACPDR, the parties have agreed that the proposal in its entirety should be submitted for federal approval."**...

### **5. Background**

**"The Fairmont Chateau Laurier Hotel is a National Historic Site of Canada and occupies one of the most prominent sites in the Capital. The proposed addition site overlooks the Rideau canal UNESCO World Heritage Site (Ottawa Locks) and Parliament Hill National Historic site, and is adjacent to Major's Hill Park and MacKenzie Avenue/Confederation Boulevard.**

**The Chateau is one of the symbols that form part of the View Protection Study. It forms part of significant foregrounds and backgrounds views that**

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<sup>7</sup> NCC *Plan for Canada's Capital 2017-2067* page 64

**have been identified by the NCC and the City of Ottawa, and have been approved by the Commission and adopted into the *City's Official Plan* and by-laws (specially Zoning bylaw 2008-250).**

**The building also plays a key role in the realm of Capital Views associated with the Rideau Canal. A views easement was granted by the NCC to the US Embassy over Major's Hill Park adjacent to the subject land.”<sup>8</sup>**

In conclusion, we wish to point out that the NCC's own *Plan for Canada's Capital* asserts that the NCC shares the responsibility for ensuring that Canada's Capital is “inspiring and exemplary”<sup>9</sup>. The proposed design for an extension to the Château Laurier, an important landmark at the heart of the Capital, is a rectangular box with a flat roof. The design is neither inspiring nor exemplary.

The NCC *Plan for Canada's Capital 2017-2067* establishes the following:

**“Conservation is a critical part of the NCC’s mandate. Understanding the heritage fabric of the Capital in all its forms-built heritage...and cultural landscapes...is critical to planning for the future.**

**The NCC will be a leader in the stewardship and management of its own heritage assets. Works involving a heritage site, or its immediate surroundings must be based on a strong understanding of its heritage value and the conservation of heritage-defining elements.”<sup>10</sup>**

In its stewardship of its own heritage asset, Major’s Hill Park, the NCC must ensure that its conservation, as a public park with a long history and a design which has evolved over time, is rooted in a values-based approach. The NCC should exercise its leadership to ensure that the proposed addition to the Château Laurier, located in the immediate surroundings of the park, represents good conservation practice, and reinforces the character and values of Major’s Hill Park and its important surroundings.

The proposed design of the addition does not achieve this. It introduces a visual and physical barrier (See Appendix A figures 3 and 4) exacerbated by its linear footprint that does not engage the park. ‘Landscaping’ is not the answer to redress this fundamental architectural failure and its disastrous domino effect on the surroundings of Major’s Hill Park.

The proposed addition does not represent good conservation practice. It is demonstrably incompatible with the architecture of the Château Laurier as defined

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<sup>8</sup> NCC submission to the Advisory Committee on Planning Design and Realty (ACPDR) May 5, 2016 (obtained through ATIA in July 2019)

<sup>9</sup> NCC Plan for Canada’s Capital 2017-2067 Page 8 CCN Plan de la capitale du Canada 2017-2067 page 8

<sup>10</sup> NCC Plan for Canada’s Capital 2017-2067 Page 65 CCN Plan de la capitale du Canada 2017-2067 page 65

by Standard 11 of the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. (see Appendix C)

We, the undersigned, respectfully urge the Board of Directors of the National Capital Commission to show leadership at this pivotal time, to intervene without delay and to deliver an essential part of its mandate.

The NCC should use both its discretion and its authority to ensure that the proposed addition is compatible with the architecture of the Château Laurier National Historic Site, enhances the Picturesque landscape, and contributes to the character and national identity of Canada's Capital.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Belliveau, President, Heritage Ottawa

Catherine Bélanger,

Christina Cameron C.M., Canada Research Chair on Built Heritage, Université de Montréal (2005-2019)

Peter Coffman, Associate Professor, History and Theory of Architecture, Carleton University

The Honourable David Collenette, PC , Former Federal Cabinet Minister

Penny Collenette, O. Ont., Adjunct Common Law Professor, University of Ottawa

Thomas d'Aquino C.M., CEO Intercounsel

Shannon Day-Newman, Day-Newman Network

Linda Dicaire, Fellow CSLA, Landscape Architect, Chair Rockcliffe Park Heritage Committee

David B. Flemming, Co-Chair, Advocacy Committee, Heritage Ottawa

Lyette Fortin, Hon. OAA, Adjunct Professor, Architectural Conservation, School of

Architecture, Carleton University

Margaret Huber, Former Ambassador

The Honourable Serge Joyal, PC, OC, GOQ, Canadian Senator

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

Leslie Maitland, Former President, Heritage Ottawa

Maureen McTeer, Lawyer and author

Barry Padolsky, B.Arch., MSc. Urban Design, OAA, FRAIC, RCA, CAHP, Member, City of Ottawa Built Heritage Sub-Committee

Carolyn Quinn, Vice-Chair, City of Ottawa Built Heritage Sub-Committee

Carole Therrien, Anthropologist and community advocate

cc.

Chairperson and all members of the Advisory Committee on Planning Design and Realty (ACPDR)

Attachments:

**Appendix A:** Images

**Appendix B:** NCC submission to the Advisory Committee on Planning Design and Realty (ACPDR), May 5, 2016, pages 1&2

**Appendix C:** Letter July 7, 2019 to Mayor of Ottawa and Councillors from Lyette Fortin, Adjunct Professor, Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism, Carleton University (re. Standard 11)