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# *Cultural Heritage Impact Statement*

## *Earnscliffe*

*140 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, ON*

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### **Prepared for:**

Estates and Security Directorate  
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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 About the CHIS

The City of Ottawa has requested a Cultural Heritage Impact Statement (CHIS) prepared by a qualified heritage consultant to examine potential impacts from the demolition of two buildings (Old Office Building, c 1901, and a garage, 1992; Figure 1 and Figure 2) at Earnscliffe and the construction of a new office building on the site of the demolished buildings (Figure 3). The property is owned by the British High Commission (BHC), which acquired Earnscliffe (Figure 4) in 1930 for use as the Official Residence of the British High Commissioner and offices. In 1964, the BHC opened its current office tower at 80 Elgin Street, leaving Earnscliffe to serve almost exclusively as the Official Residence.<sup>1</sup> It now intends to consolidate staff from Elgin Street at Earnscliffe in a new BHC building (Figure 5 and Figure 6) that will sit about 30 m (at the closest point) from the Official Residence built c 1855.

In 1981 the City of Ottawa issued a "Notice of Intention" to designate Earnscliffe under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, but the designation bylaw has not been passed. Issuance of a "Notice of Intention" confers protection on a property and Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* applies. An "Application to Alter" under 33 (1) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for the current proposal to demolish the Old Office Building is not required. The City of Ottawa's Notice of Intention to Designate is attached as Appendix A. The CHIS was requested by the City to inform its comments on the demolition of the Old Office Building and a Site Plan Control Application for new construction. The Old Office Building renovated and expanded as offices for the BHC in 1930-1931 with plans by local architect John Albert Ewart (Figure 7).

Earnscliffe is an estate property recognized as having national and local heritage significance due to its history, architecture and landscape. Its main features are a beautiful Gothic Revival stone house dating from c 1855 that was owned and rented by several prominent individuals, including Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, and a picturesque landscape organized to showcase the house and support views from the house across the Ottawa River (Figure 8).

Macdonald rented the house in 1870-1871 and in 1882. He purchased the property in 1883 and died there in 1891. In 1930, the property with its large house and stable was purchased by the BHC from the estate of Charles Harriss. It is likely that the large stable renovated as offices for the BHC was constructed for Harriss and his wife Ella on the site of a smaller stable and sheds that were owned by Macdonald.

The CHIS is authored by Julie Harris<sup>2</sup>, Contentworks Inc., CAHP, and input from Robert Martin, Robertson Martin Architects, and research assistance from Natalie Rathwell.

## 1.2 Acknowledgements

The CHIS has been prepared with input and support from Ashley Whittal, Estates Manager, British High Commission, Ottawa; HOK architects, Christopher Knight and Andrew Butler; and

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<sup>1</sup> "Construction over, work starts," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 17 April 1964: 28.

<sup>2</sup> Julie Harris, President, Contentworks Inc., is a Professional Member of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals. She has over 30 years of experience in heritage evaluation and historical research. She has been qualified as a witness in the field of heritage evaluation for the purposes of an OMB; served as a provincial appointee to the Conservation Review Board of Ontario; and conducted architectural histories for hundreds of buildings and landscapes for various government clients in Ontario and other parts of Canada.



Sally Coutts, Heritage Planner, City of Ottawa. The CHIS author visited the property on 25 September 2019 with Robert Martin, Architect, and 11 October 2019.

## 1.3 Sources

In addition to historical sources and newspaper accounts identified in footnotes, the following materials were used to prepare the CHIS:

- HOK International Ltd., New Construction of Ottawa Re-Provision BHC – Earnscliffe, Issued for Design Prop #5, 6 September 2019
- HOK International Ltd., New Construction of Ottawa Re-Provision BHC – Earnscliffe, Context (internal document)
- Earnscliffe files, National Capital Commission Records Centre
- [Reddaway, Norman]/ Great Britain. 1955 and 1961. *Earnscliffe: home of Canada's first prime minister and since 1930 residence of high commissioners for the United Kingdom in Canada*. London: Commonwealth Relations Office.<sup>3</sup>
- *Earnscliffe sale complete list of furniture, china and glassware, pictures, ornaments, etc. : the property of the late Right Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald to be sold at Earnscliffe, Ottawa : commencing Tuesday 15th May next at 10 a.m., W.H. Lewis, auctioneer*. 1982.
- Newton, Michael. 1985. *Earnscliffe, Ottawa: residence of the Rt. Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald*.
- Goodenough, Veronica. 1998. *Earnscliffe*. Ottawa, Ont: Historical Society of Ottawa.
- Reynolds, Louise. 1979. *Agnes: The Biography of Lady Macdonald*. Toronto: Samuel Stevens.

The following items are among a set of records held by the National Archives in the United Kingdom that might be pertinent to understanding the history of Earnscliffe but could not be consulted for the CHIS:

- National Archives, Kew, Reference CO 1069.291, CANADA 23. Earnscliffe, Ottawa 1850s-1950s. Volume of photographs on the history of the British High Commissioner's official residence. [Note: The images may be missing, according to the National Archives website.]
- National Archives, Kew, Reference DO 127/126, "Purchase of 'Earnscliffe' as residence for High Commissioner," 1930 January to 1930 December.

## 1.4 Present Owner and Contract Information

British High Commission  
80 Elgin Street, Ottawa, ON K1P 5K7  
c/o Ashley Whittal, Estates Manager  
E: Ashley.Whittal@fco.gov.uk

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<sup>3</sup> Reddaway's official account of Earnscliffe for the Commonwealth Relations Office is an important secondary source on the property, based on primary source documents available to the British Government, that has been relied upon by later authors. Reddaway's account of factual information is reliable, however the author makes several assumptions. One suggestion that has caused confusion is Reddaway's statement that Sir John A. Macdonald, "**probably** built the stables where the High Commissioner's Office now stands" [page 21, emphasis added]. This has led to the popular misattribution of this building, which based on Fire Insurance records was built by Dr. and Ella Harriss following Sir John A. Macdonald's death and the subsequent sale of the property.





## 1.5 Development Site

### 1.5.1 Legal Descriptions

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- 042180355 and 042180358 - CON C RF PT LETTER O & LOT 9;10 11 SUSSEX EARNSCLIFFE
- 042180359 PARTS OF DALHOUSIE, BELLEVUE; T ERR AND EARNSCLIFFE AVE; CLOSED BY BY-LAW 7019 VACANT; LAND LEASE - 25 YEARS
- 042180382 PLAN 3 LOT 13 PT LOT 17 PT; LOT 18 LOT 19 RP 4R-14198; PART 2 LESS RP 4R-14198 PART;1
- 042180383 CON C PT TWP 'O' PLAN 3 LOT 13 PT LOT 17 PT; LOT 18 LOT 19 RP 4R-14198; PART 2 LESS RP 4R-14198 PART;1
- 042180384 PLAN 3 LOT 13 PT LOT 17 PT; LOT 18 LOT 19 RP 4R-14198; PART 2 LESS RP 4R-14198 PART;1

Based on the Directory of Federal Real Property, the new project will touch a small portion of land owned by the National Capital Commission (Figure 9).

The individual lots that make up the property include sections that were formerly streets – namely McKay Street (also called Earnscliffe Avenue), Lady Grey Drive and Bellevue Terrace. The alignment of McKay Street is visible in the landscape pattern and organization of Earnscliffe.

The property line and regulatory setbacks that will be addressed in the site plan application are included here in Figure 10.

### 1.5.2 General Description

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The High Commission's property is an irregular-shaped parcel approximately .67 ha in size, with a narrow handle leading into the property from Sussex Drive (Figure 10 and Figure 11). The property's western edge follows the edge of a steep bank above the Ottawa River. The eastern boundary abuts the property of the National Research Council (NRC) Laboratories, with a large paved surface-parking area set between Earnscliffe and the NRC building. Most of the property sits slightly below the grade of Sussex Drive, as discussed in more detail in the description of the project and the assessment of the project's impact on heritage values.

The property has two distinct parts. The northern part (Lot O) was acquired in 1854 by MacKinnon from Thomas McKay. MacKinnon constructed a large Gothic Revival stone house around 1855 that was approached from a drive off of the road that is now Sussex Drive. In 1872, a subsequent owner, Thomas Reynolds, purchased lots on the south side of McKay Street (Figure 12). Since then, the two parts of the property, while no longer separated by a street, have had different functions and physical characteristics (Figure 13).

Lot O is organized as a single residential estate with a curved driveway, paths and plantings that create a 19<sup>th</sup>-century landscape in the romantic picturesque tradition. The south side of the property follows the geometry of town lots in its circulation system and the placement of the Old Office Building parallel to the former street alignment with a perpendicular wing (Figure 14 and Figure 15). This side presents itself as a service zone; the north side as the residential zone. A swimming pool tucked out of sight on the north side of the property.



The centrepiece of the property is a large, stone house constructed c 1855<sup>4</sup> in a Gothic Revival Style surrounded by grounds containing mature trees, walkways and an entry drive. The property is enclosed by a metal and stone fence along the edge facing Sussex Drive (on the south) and a chain-link fence on the other borders. The gated entry to the property leads to a driveway that branches off to the north to the Official Residence and to the west to the Old Office Building.

From Sussex Drive, the Earnscliffe residence and the Old Office Building are visible above and through the trees (when they are not in full leaf) when approaching the property along Sussex Drive (Figure 16). The clearest view of the buildings, however, is from the Ottawa River and the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge (Figure 17).

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### 1.5.3 Context

Earnscliffe is located along a section of Sussex Drive to the west of Rideau Hall and the Prime Minister's Residence that is dotted with large lots occupied by institutional properties, including foreign missions, federal buildings and Ottawa's former city hall (now owned by the federal government for offices). Mature trees on the NCC's property adjacent to the Earnscliffe property soften the landscape and help communicate the road's function as part of Confederation Boulevard.

Directly in front of Earnscliffe, Sussex Drive is raised above the natural grade as it rises over the approaches to the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge. The change in grade created a triangle of land behind the Old Office Building, between the bridge, Sussex Drive and Earnscliffe, that is maintained by the NCC with a path connecting the road to the bridge. Until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the entire area was the location of many gracious homes and streets that extended from Ottawa's Lower Town towards Rockcliffe Park, as well as rail and lumber yards. The extensive redevelopment of the area with the realignment and removal of streets and the building of the Lester B. Pearson Building and Ottawa's old city hall removed most relics of its early 20<sup>th</sup>-century landscape that was built on an even older landscape connected to the timber industry.

## 1.6 Formal Heritage Recognitions

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### 1.6.1 Earnscliffe

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#### 1.6.1.1 Ontario Heritage Act

The City of Ottawa has not formally designated Earnscliffe under the provisions of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The properties adjacent to Earnscliffe, the National Research Council Headquarters (a Classified Federal Heritage Building) and the Lester B. Pearson Building, opened in 1974, are federally owned.

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#### 1.6.1.2 Earnscliffe National Historic Site of Canada

Earnscliffe was declared to be a National Historic Site of Canada in 1960 as the home of the

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<sup>4</sup> The exact date is unknown, but the earliest possible date is 1856 and the latest date is 1857. See: [Norman Reddaway]/ Great Britain, *Earnscliffe: home of Canada's first prime minister and since 1930 residence of high commissioners for the United Kingdom in Canada* (London: Commonwealth Relations Office, 1955 and 1961): 4.

right Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald, “chief architect of Confederation.”<sup>5</sup> The heritage value is described as:

The heritage value of this site resides in its historical associations with Sir John A. Macdonald as illustrated by the physical elements of the property surviving from the time of his occupancy. The house had been built in 1855-57 by John MacKinnon and rented by Sir John A. Macdonald in 1870-71 and in 1882, until he bought it in 1883. He lived here until his death in 1891. For many of those years Macdonald was Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada. Earnscliffe was subsequently occupied by a succession of private owners until it was acquired by the government of the United Kingdom in 1930. Since that date, it has served as the residence of its High Commissioner in Canada.

#### 1.6.1.2.1 Cultural Heritage Attributes

As per the Statement of Significance prepared by Parks Canada, the:

Key elements speaking to the heritage value of this site include:

- the picturesque siting of the property at the edge of the Ottawa River;
- the setting of the house at the end of a drive through landscaped grounds with discretely placed service buildings;
- the former stables in their original location, massing, materials and decorative treatment;  
the irregular massing of the house under cross-pitched roofs with front-facing gables; its stone construction;
- the Gothic Revival treatment of the exterior design with gables, decorative barge boards and chimney pots, Tudor-arched central entry, drip mouldings over main windows, a variety of window sizes and forms;
- evidence of the interior layout and finishes surviving from Sir John A. Macdonald’s occupancy;  
access to river views from the rear of the house.

No research reports are cited as the basis for the statement of significance.<sup>6</sup> A more complete statement would have discussed the internal organization of the landscape in distinct zones, the stonework and carpentry, and the association of the property with Agnes Macdonald, musician Charles Harriss and his wife Ella Harriss.

The following attributes could be added to the above list:

- the spatial organization of the site, with broad grounds in front of the house, the house set close to the edge of the river, and the distinctive treatment and design of the north and south parts as divided by the former alignment of McKay Street;
- the visual relationships within the site that showcase the residence and make other components, including the Old Office Building, subordinate to it;

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<sup>5</sup> “Earnscliffe National Historic Site of Canada,” *Canadian Register of Historic Places*, online at: <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=12684&pid=0>.

<sup>6</sup> A single report titled “Historico-architectural significance of the Sir John A. MacDonald [sic] buildings still standing in Kingston,” May 1960, was used by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada when it recommended that Earnscliffe should be considered “a national shrine” and that the government should “investigate ways and means to acquire it for this purpose.” Parks Canada, “Record of National Historic Site Designation Reference File,” dated 18 February 2000.



- evidence of the original limits of Lot O and the urban lot patterns that existed prior to the expansion of the property in 1868, as seen in the straight drive on the former street alignment, the east-west alignment of the Old Office Building and historic vegetation patterns.

The attribute concerning the stable could be better expressed as:

- the former stables and office building, as evidence in its original materials, its gambrel roof shape and its orientation.

## 1.6.2 National Research Council Laboratories Classified Federal Heritage Building

The National Research Council Canada (NRC) Laboratories building at 100 Sussex Drive is a large sandstone and granite building designed in a grand Beaux-Arts Style (Figure 18 and Figure 19). As described in the Statement of Significance, this finely crafted building is noted for the high quality of its materials and the richness and sophistication of its exterior detailing.

### 1.6.2.1.1 Cultural Heritage Attributes

As per the statement of significance, the heritage value of the building is related to the structure, specifically:

- the Beaux-Arts classicism of the design;
- classical elements such as the entrance pavilions, the Roman Doric columns, the pediments and entablature;
- the overall effect of monumentality, which is emphasized by the great length of the façade and by the execution in sandstone and granite;
- the fine lines of the multi-paned steel casement windows, commonly used in Beaux-Arts buildings;
- the overall shape of the Laboratories Building, which is a squared figure eight, designed around two interior courtyards, and which is in keeping with Beaux-Arts planning principles;
- the richness of the materials in the public areas, including Travertine walls and coffered and painted ceilings;
- the design of the working areas of the laboratory building, characterized by utilitarianism and attention to safety;
- the large, well-landscaped site, which is located on Ottawa's official ceremonial route, Sussex Drive.

### 1.6.2.1.2 Potential for Affecting the Cultural Heritage Attributes of the NRC Laboratories FHB

The demolitions of the two buildings at Earnscliffe will not affect the cultural heritage attributes of the NRC Laboratories. The buildings are located a distance away from the NRC building and have no association with its history (Figure 18 and Figure 19).

The new office building will be visible from the Sussex Drive, but partially hidden by vegetation and the slope of the ground. Furthermore, the new building will sit approximately 100 m from the NRC building at the nearest point. A secondary emergency exit for Earnscliffe will be required to support the installation of a new office building at Earnscliffe. A narrow road will lead towards a gate that will open to the NRC's existing parking lot.

Because no potential negative impacts on the NRC property's heritage value have been identified, this CHIS is focused on impacts on Earnscliffe as a heritage place.



## 2 Heritage Resource Description and History

### 2.1 Description of Cultural Heritage Resources

#### 2.1.1 Earnscliffe House

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The Official Residence at Earnscliffe has been described as a “finer house of the age”<sup>7</sup> due to a confident and robust interpretation of Romantic Gothic Revival architecture as seen the application of multiple Gothic Revival motifs, its picturesque composition of steeply pitched roofs and dormers, its fine stonework, and its ornate and handsome bargeboards. The house occupies a commanding position overlooking the Ottawa River. According to the authors of the *Carleton Saga*, the house was built by Donald Dow, a prominent and talented stonemason and carpenter, and Peter Fraser, a carpenter.<sup>8</sup>

#### 2.1.2 Landscape

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Lot O, on which Earnscliffe sits, was purchased by John MacKinnon in 1854; the house was constructed c. 1855. The lot was just over one acre. The property was expanded by Thomas Reynolds in 1872 to include Lots 13 and 19. At an unspecified date, additional land leading down from the cliff face to the Ottawa River was also acquired by Reynolds. The grounds in front of the house were fenced with at least two gates leading to McKay Street – one near the corner of McKay and Dalhousie; the other leading towards sheds on Lot 13 (Figure 20 and Figure 21).

The lots were on the south side of McKay Street, across from Lot O. Sir John A. Macdonald purchased this entire parcel of land in 1883, and in 1884 added a small triangular piece of land next to Earnscliffe’s front gate, bringing the eastern edge of the irregularly shaped Lot O up to Dalhousie street. The Harriss’ did not expand the boundaries of the property parcel. In 1930 when the parcel was bought by the British Government, the right-of-way for McKay Street between Lot O and Lots 13 and 19 was abrogated, and the two sides of the property were enclosed as one.

No definitive plans of the original landscape designs at Earnscliffe have survived, but a design that followed typical approaches to villa or cottage residences of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and mid 19<sup>th</sup> century are suggested by photographs and later aerial views.<sup>9</sup> While owned by Thomas Reynolds, Earnscliffe had a neatly kept circular drive bordered by spaced fieldstones or low fieldstone walls and surrounding a central area of lawn and shrubbery (Figure 22). A picket fence, hidden by loosely kept shrubbery ran along McKay Street c. 1878, with two gates on the east side. Lady Agnes Macdonald described Earnscliffe’s position as “on a cliff, fringed with low trees”.<sup>10</sup> Her garden included flower beds and vines. Guests described the property as having beautiful grounds. Along the cliff face below the property are stunted trees that are remnants of the original old-growth forest.<sup>11</sup>

The division of the property into south and north sections separated by the alignment of

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Waldron, *Exploring the Capital: an Architectural Guide to the Ottawa Region* (Vancouver: Figure 1 Publishing, 2017): 40.

<sup>8</sup> Harry James William Walker and Olive Walker, *Carleton saga* (Ottawa: Printed by the Runge Press, 1975): 342.

<sup>9</sup> Newton, *Earnscliffe, Ottawa*: 26-28.

<sup>10</sup> Veronica Goodenough, *Earnscliffe* (Ottawa, Ont: Historical Society of Ottawa, 1998): 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> Goodenough, *Earnscliffe, Historical Society*: 11. Citing a survey by the National Capital Commission and the University of Guelph.



McKay Street continued even after the property was renovated for the BHC (Figure 23). Today, the two parts of the property are clearly visible in circulation systems and plantings.

### 2.1.3 Old Office Building

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The Old Office Building is a one-and-a-half storey gambrel roofed structure on a rectangular plan. It is connected to a shorter two-storey wing that creates the L-shaped footprint of the building. The tall gambrel roof speaks to the building's history as a stable and coach house. The building sits on a stone foundation or pad. Most of the windows are aluminum clad. A small part of the building is currently in use as an office and workshop for the gardeners. The building sits within one metre of one of the boundaries of the property (to the east).

#### 2.1.3.1 Origins of the Old Office Building

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The Old Office Building is located on part of Lot 13 that stretches along the south side of what was McKay Street, a former right of way that led from Sussex Drive to the cliff on the Ottawa River. Thomas Reynolds expanded his property beyond Lot 0 in 1872 to include the north part of Lot 13, the north half of Lot 19 and a steep riverbank section below Lot 13 (Figure 12).

The 1878 fire insurance plan for the City of Ottawa shows two buildings marked as sheds on Lot 13 (Figure 24). A third smaller shed appears to be attached to William Pittman Lett's home and outbuildings at 10-12 Dalhousie Street on Lot 18.<sup>12</sup> It is unclear whether these sheds were built as part of the major building improvements Thomas Reynolds completed in August 1874, following the June 10 fire at Earnscliffe,<sup>13</sup> or were existing on the property when Reynolds bought it.

Macdonald purchased Earnscliffe in 1883. According to one of the detailed contemporary biographies of Macdonald, he was driven by a cabman named Patrick Buckley for "38 years", including all the years he was in power.<sup>14</sup> Buckley kept a livery stable in Ottawa. Near the beginning of his long period of service to Macdonald, Buckley was one of the people originally held for the assassination of Thomas D'Arcy McGee.

The 1888-1901 fire insurance plans (Figure 25 and Figure 26) shows that the largest shed has been divided in two, and the second largest is now identified as a stable. In the corner of the L formed by these two structures, two additional attached sheds have been added. A close examination of a high-resolution scan of this map indicates that no revisions have been made to Lot 13 between 1888 and the 1901 reprinting, meaning these are the structures that were present on the site at the time of Sir John A. Macdonald's death in 1889 and at the time of the sale of the property to Ella Harriss in 1900. In sum, the large stable block which was reworked into offices by the BHC in 1931 was likely added after 1901, and not built by Macdonald.

The 1912 fire insurance plan for the City of Ottawa clearly demarcates the lots and shows a substantial expansion of the stable on Lot 13 (Figure 27 and Figure 28). Mrs. Ella Harriss purchased Earnscliffe in May 1900. The expansion of the stables to approximately their current proportions appears to have occurred during the 29-year occupancy of the property

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<sup>12</sup> The fire insurance plan for the City of Ottawa for 1888-1901 more clearly indicates that the small shed may have been connected to William Pittman Lett's buildings.

<sup>13</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 14.

<sup>14</sup> E. B. Biggar, *Anecdotal Life of Sir John Macdonald* (Montreal: J. Lovell, 1891): 241. The telephone directory for 1896 lists the address of the livery stable at 77-79 Metcalfe Street, the only address listed on Metcalfe between Albert and Slater streets.





by the wealthy Harriss (Figure 29). They “entertained on a large scale”, including hosting members of the royal family, with the gardens beautifully kept and no expense spared in the renovation and re-decoration of the house.<sup>15</sup> Enlarging the stables significantly to accommodate their guests would have seemed very logical to them.

Until the end of the Harriss’ occupancy of Earnscliffe, Lot O, on which the house sits, was enclosed by a fence and separated from Lots 13 and 19 by McKay Street (Figure 30).

#### 2.1.3.2 Conversion of the Building into Offices

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Following the purchase of Earnscliffe in 1930 by the BHC, the right of way between the house and the stables was abrogated,<sup>16</sup> the fence along Earnscliffe Avenue was removed (Figure 31). The proximity of the large stables to the house, and the potential to convert them into offices, was a deciding factor in the purchase of the property by the BHC.<sup>17</sup> The renovation of the Old Office Building was completed in 1931; it has been enlarged twice since then, including replacing the attached one-storey shed with a two-storey structure.

The conversion of the former stable into office space by the BHC in 1930-1931 required refinishing the interior of the building, the addition of long dormers in the gambrel roof, and a new entrance and stairway. To date, no drawings of the office conversion have been located.<sup>18</sup> A newspaper account from September 1931, however, reported that the BHC spent \$12,000 on the Old Office Building. It included a large reception room, private offices for the High Commissioner and secretaries, other offices and storage space for records. It was described as “suitably furnished with beautiful Oriental rugs, colorful door and window hangings, and the best of walnut and leather upholstered furniture.” The building was given an Arts & Crafts treatment with Tudor Revival detailing.

The Tudor detailing applied by Ewart has been either removed or covered up by subsequent changes, such as the application of new stucco. The interior of the building is a warren of walls and corridors from the building’s period of use as offices and apartments for staff. The need for an office at Earnscliffe diminished after the opening of the new BHC office tower at 80 Elgin Street in 1964. Today, the building is divided into living units and offices that are no longer in use.<sup>19</sup>

#### 2.1.3.3 Architect – John Ewart

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The following biography is taken from Robert Hill’s *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950*, online at: <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1562>.

John Albert Ewart (1872-1964), a leading architect in Ottawa, Ont. who was active there for more than fifty years. Born there on 20 April 1872, he was the son of David Ewart, Chief Architect of the Dept. of Public Works, and it is likely that J. Albert was persuaded by his father to pursue a career in architecture. Rather than train under his father, however, he was placed in the office of Arnoldi & Calderon as an apprentice in 1887, and spent four years of training there. In 1891 he moved to Toronto to enroll in the School of Practical Science at the University of Toronto, and later graduated from there in 1895. After returning to Ottawa, his former employer King M. Arnoldi invited

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<sup>15</sup> Newton, *Earnscliffe, Ottawa*: 12. Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 28.

<sup>17</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 28.

<sup>18</sup> The John Albert Ewart Fonds, NAC, Acc. 752-875; Acc. 76703/13; Acc. 77803/14, at the LAC includes a file concerning the renovations for the BHC but they are limited to drawings of the Official Residence.

<sup>19</sup> Goodenough, *Historical Society, Earnscliffe*: 10.



the young Ewart to become a full partner of his firm (Evening Journal [Ottawa], 12 Sept. 1895, 8; see list of works under Arnoldi & Ewart). Their partnership was active until 1904, then Ewart worked as draftsman for Band, Burritt & Meredith for two years, and opened an office under his own name in 1906, and continued to practise for the next 45 years.

His best-known works there include an early Ottawa skyscraper called The Transportation Building, 1916-17, which he designed in an elaborate Beaux-Arts style that featured a façade clad entirely in exquisitely crafted terra cotta tile. Ewart also possessed a scholarly knowledge of ecclesiastical architecture which he used to great effect in his refined Gothic Revival design for Southminster United Church in 1931. Ewart was an adept and skilled delineator and draftsman, and effortlessly produced some of the finest architectural drawings to found in public collections in Canada. Most of these drawings have survived, and are now held at the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa ... Ewart retired in 1958 and died in Ottawa at the age of 92 years on 21 April 1964.

## 2.2 Site Development History

### 2.2.1 Thomas McKay, 1838 to 1854

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In 1838 Thomas McKay purchased and settled ten acres of land on the west side of the Rideau River.<sup>20</sup>

### 2.2.2 John MacKinnon, 1854 to 1866

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On February 2, 1854 McKay's son-in-law and junior partner, John MacKinnon, purchased slightly over one acre of this land from McKay, at the westernmost end of McKay Street above the bank of the Ottawa River.<sup>21</sup> John MacKinnon's wife Annie was the oldest of Thomas McKay's sixteen children. The house, later to be named Earnscliffe, appears to have been built in 1855, after McKay's death, with Annie and John MacKinnon moving in in 1857.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.2.3 Thomas C. Keefer, 1866 to 1868

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Renowned hydraulic engineer Thomas C. Keefer was another son-in-law of Thomas McKay, married to McKay's daughter Elizabeth. In 1866 John MacKinnon died, leaving the house heavily mortgaged. Keefer assisted his sister-in-law Annie and purchased the house and \$6000 mortgage for \$48.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.2.4 Thomas Reynolds, 1868 to 1882

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On April 18, 1868 Thomas Reynolds, manager of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway, purchased the property at auction for \$7500.<sup>24</sup> The house was briefly leased for use as a military hospital, with plans drawn up by the military in the autumn of 1868 and a lease in

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<sup>20</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 4.

<sup>21</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 6-8.

<sup>23</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 10.

<sup>24</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 10.



place for the house from April 9, 1869 to September 21, 1870.<sup>25</sup> In late 1870 Sir John A. Macdonald first leased the house from Reynolds until 1871. The Reynolds family occupied and improved the house from 1872, expanding the property to include the north half of Lot 19, the north half of Lot 13 across McKay Street from the house and the riverbank below it (Figure 12 and Figure 22).<sup>26</sup> The name of the property as Earnscliffe was taken during ownership by Reynolds.

A major fire at Earnscliffe on June 10, 1874, forced the family to temporarily move and prompted major building work and improvements. In 1879 Thomas Reynolds abruptly left Ottawa for London, England due to illness and died. Earnscliffe was left unoccupied in 1880/81 but was leased to a Major Holbech in 1882. From October to November of 1882 Major Holbech was posted to Egypt and sublet the house to Sir John A. Macdonald who was already in negotiations with the Reynolds family to purchase Earnscliffe.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.2.5 Sir John A. Macdonald and Agnes Macdonald 1883 to 1900

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In January 1883, Sir John A. Macdonald purchased the property from Thomas Reynolds Jr and family for \$10,040. The property included the house on Lot O, which was fenced, the north half of Lot 19, an unenclosed strip of land next to William Pittman Lett's house opposite Earnscliffe's main gate, and the bank of the river below Reynolds' Lot 13.<sup>28</sup> Colonel Holbech and his family may have continued to occupy the house for part of 1883. A letter from Sir John to his sister, dated October 27, 1883, states that he and Agnes had moved into Earnscliffe.

Lawyer James McCracken (sometimes spelled MacCracken), the occupant of the house on the south half of Lot 13 facing Metcalfe Square, requested permission from Sir John A. Macdonald to pasture a horse for a few weeks on the north part of Lot 13 in a letter dated June 22, 1883, before Sir John A. Macdonald had moved in permanently to Earnscliffe. McCracken explicitly states that, "I do not desire to use the stables or shed, and in fact would prefer...to have them locked."<sup>29</sup> This comment suggests that the buildings, which are likely the same buildings appearing on the 1878 Fire Insurance Plan, and again, slightly expanded on the 1888 Fire Insurance Plan (Figure 24 and Figure 26) were not being used. It is unclear if the sheds surveyed in 1878 were originally connected to buildings on Lett's property on Lot 18 or if they were built by Reynolds. It is also unclear whether the expansion of the sheds and stable shown in the 1888 was done while Reynolds or Macdonald owned the property.

In 1884 Sir John expanded the grounds. He purchased, "a small triangular piece of ground near the front gate from James Maclaren" and in his book about the history of Earnscliffe, Norman Reddaway adds, "he **probably** built the stables where the High Commissioner's Office now stands" [emphasis added].<sup>30</sup> Sir John A. Macdonald may have had the existing sheds on Lot 13 renovated to include the small stable pictured in the 1888-1901 fire insurance plan

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<sup>25</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 13.

<sup>26</sup> Newton, *Earnscliffe, Ottawa*: 5, citing: Ottawa Citizen, June 13, 1874. Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 13-14, 36-37. Letter from Colonel H. Bernard to Thomas Reynolds, Junior, of London. (Ottawa: Nov 23, 1882).

<sup>27</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 16.

<sup>28</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 17-18, 36-37. Letter from Colonel H. Bernard to Thomas Reynolds, Junior, of London. (Ottawa: Nov 23, 1882).

<sup>29</sup> Letter from John J. McCracken to Sir John A. Macdonald. (Ottawa: June 22, 1883). Library and Archives Canada, MG26-A. Box 394. Container C-1762. Item ID 541430. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/CollectionSearch/Pages/record.aspx?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=541430&new=-8586308793094801530>

<sup>30</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 21.



as Lady Agnes Macdonald kept her own cow and hens.<sup>31</sup> The previous owner, Thomas Reynolds, is known to have used stables elsewhere on railway property. It is unclear whether Reynolds or Macdonald expanded the existing sheds, but the use of one of the former sheds as a stable likely occurred while Macdonald owned the property. Whether expanded by Macdonald or not, the sheds and stable owned by Sir John A. Macdonald were considerably smaller than the stable/coach house pictured on the 1912 Fire Insurance Plan when the property was owned by Ella and Dr. Charles Harriss.

A few years later, in mid 1888, Macdonald hired architect William Hodgson to alter Earnscliffe to include a study, ante-room, dining room, back staircase and other improvements at a cost of \$7000.<sup>32</sup> To date, no information has been located to show that the work in 1888 included rebuilding the stable or sheds.

Sir John A. Macdonald died on June 6, 1889. Although the now Baroness Macdonald of Earnscliffe was given life tenancy there, she and their daughter primarily lived abroad and leased the house to a series of tenants, including Sir John Abbott, General I.J.C. Herbert, General W.J. Gascoigne, and General E.T.H. Hutton.<sup>33</sup>

#### 2.2.6 Mrs. Ella Harriss and Dr. Charles Harris, 1900- to 1930

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Mrs. Ella Harriss purchased Earnscliffe in May 1900 for \$15,000 for herself and her second husband, acclaimed musician Dr. Charles Harriss. Ella had inherited wealth from her first husband, an American industrialist. Charles Harriss was “an ardent and outspoken British imperialist whose lifelong quest was to establish British musical excellence in Canada and in other parts of the empire.”<sup>34</sup> Born in Cobourg, Ontario, Ella frequently visited her two sisters in Ottawa prior to the purchase of Earnscliffe. Her sisters, Mrs. Desiré Girouard and Mrs. William McDougal, were married to a Supreme Court Judge and Father of Confederation respectively. Charles Harriss first arrived in Ottawa from England in 1882 as the organist to Ottawa’s St. Alban’s Church on the invitation of Lady Macdonald, before subsequently moving to Montréal.<sup>35</sup> Ella and Charles were married in 1892 and had no children.

Beginning in 1900, Earnscliffe was the subject of “lavish” renovations as a place for entertainment by the Harriss’.<sup>36</sup> During the initial work, the attic caught fire but little damage was done to the main living areas.<sup>37</sup> Ella and Charles Harriss were among the most notable social organizers in Ottawa and regularly hosted musical evenings at Earnscliffe.

Ella Harriss died in 1924. Charles lived at Earnscliffe until his death in 1929.<sup>38</sup> The large new stable was likely built by the Harriss’ to replace a small stable and sheds that appears in plans from the period when the property was owned by Macdonald (Figure 28 and Figure 23).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Goodenough, *Earnscliffe, Historical Society*: 6.

<sup>32</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 21.

<sup>33</sup> Newton, *Earnscliffe, Ottawa*: 11.

<sup>34</sup> Nadia Turbide, “Harriss, Charles Albert Edwin,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 9, 2019, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/harriss\\_charles\\_albert\\_edwin\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/harriss_charles_albert_edwin_15E.html).

<sup>35</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 24.

<sup>36</sup> Newton, *Earnscliffe, Ottawa*: 12. Numerous references to social events at Earnscliffe hosted by the Harriss’ appear in daily newspapers including garden parties.

<sup>37</sup> “Earnscliffe damaged today,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, 14 December 1900: 10.

<sup>38</sup> “Noted Musician Dies in Famous City Residence,” *The Ottawa Evening Journal*, 31 July 1929: 1 and 2. At Harriss’ death, discussions were taking place about whether the Conservative Party might buy Earnscliffe.

<sup>39</sup> The Charles A.E. Harris Fonds (MG30 D15) at the LAC not consulted for this report because the records were discovered too late in the research process.



### 2.2.7 British High Commission

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Earnscliffe would have been well-known to prominent people in Ottawa when the house was put up for sale after the death of Charles Harris in 1929. The Harriss' were friends with well-to-do and well-connected English families in Ottawa, including Lady Minto.

The BHC was among the first foreign legations accredited in Ottawa following the Imperial Conference of 1926 that acknowledged the equality of the Dominions with the United Kingdom. The formal diplomatic presence began in 1928, two years after the American embassy was established and the same year that the French sent its first ambassador to Canada. Both the United Kingdom and France purchased properties on Sussex Drive with views of the Ottawa River.

The British Government, represented by High Commissioner Sir William Clark, saw the advantage of acquiring Earnscliffe as a prestigious property with streetcar connections to the centre of the city and the capacity to provide a residence and offices in single location. Earnscliffe was purchased for \$90,000 in June 1930. The City (or the Federal District Commission) agreed to close off McKay Street and Bellevue Terrace <sup>40</sup> (Figure 30 and Figure 31) In the words of the *Ottawa Citizen*, "Through the kindness of the city of Ottawa a short street fronting the Earnscliffe property was closed, adding greatly to the convenience and beauty of the grounds. Much work has already been done also in rearranging the drive, walks and flower beds within the grounds and in landscape work."<sup>41</sup>

John Albert Ewart, one of Ottawa's leading architects and the son of David Ewart, Chief Architect, Department of Public Works, was hired to renovate the house and convert the stable on Lot 13 into offices for the High Commission. Various changes were made to the house to extend rooms and modernize systems, but the basic Gothic Revival house with its remarkably stonework remained intact.

The High Commission has maintained the house and landscape throughout its period of ownership, including a major \$2.4 million upgrading and restoration project in 2012.<sup>42</sup>

Today, Earnscliffe is a picturesque landscape that follows the model of a suburban estate. A right of way for McKay Street's extension, renamed Earnscliffe Avenue, split the property in two until its redevelopment for the BHC. All owners of Earnscliffe, but especially the Reynolds', Macdonalds, Harriss' and BHC, maintained and improved the landscape through the addition and pruning of trees and the creation of gardens. Even today, however, the separation between the naturalistic shape of the residential portion of the property and the stricter geometry of the area where the Old Office Building is located is still evident.

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<sup>40</sup> Reddaway, *Earnscliffe*: 28.

<sup>41</sup> "British High Commission, On Completion of Three Years in Office," *Ottawa Citizen*, 26 September 1931: 22.

<sup>42</sup> "Former residence of Canada's first PM getting helping hand from Britain," *Ottawa Citizen*, 29 October 2012.





## 3 Proposed Development

### 3.1 Overall Program

#### 3.1.1 Demolition

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The first phase of the project will be the demolition of two structures – the Old Office Building, rebuilt in 1930-1931, and a small garage from 1992 (Figure 10).

#### 3.1.2 New British High Commission

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The second part of the project will involve the construction of a new building for the Ottawa offices of the BHC (Figure 32 and Figure 33).

The new building will sit/ on the southwest side of the former alignment of McKay Street. The tallest portion of the building will consist of three floor levels and a mechanical penthouse set back above. The total height as measured from the ground level is 17.9 m (Figure 5).

The building will be used by approximately 60 staff. The design program accommodates offices, reception areas, several indoor parking spaces, ground-level and upper-level terraces, a new entrance gate and a secondary exit route leading from the Official Residence to the parking lot of the National Research Council building. The building program addresses numerous site constraints, including setbacks from the Ottawa River, security concerns, and the intention to separate the office function of the new building from the residential function of the house by considering how views, circulation systems and activity will affect enjoyment and suitability of the Official Residence for the High Commissioner and their family (Figure 34).

### 3.2 New British High Commission

#### 3.2.1 Overall Description

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The new BHC development includes: a new office building, security hut and gate; removal of trees; landscaping for the new buildings with a driveway, terrace and small entrance piazza; a second exit route from the property through the grounds from the Official Residence to the parking area of the NRC. The BHC will be contained, almost fully, within the sections of the property that were added to Earnscliffe by Thomas Reynolds in 1872 and Macdonald in 1884, thereby continuing the functional separation between the office portion of the property and the Official Residence. The new structures will be set behind a stone wall on the Sussex Drive side clad in the same honed limestone as used on the building (Figure 35). The name of the building will be clearly visible on the side of the building facing the gate.

The new office building sits on a modified 'T-shaped' plan on four levels (ground, second, third and mechanical penthouse) with the long elevation set on a northeast/southwest axis parallel to the former McKay Street right of way. All program spaces within the building, including the garage, are set at grade or higher. The natural topography of the site and the change in the grade of Sussex Drive as it crosses over the approach to the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge allow the ground and second levels to sit below the current grade of Sussex Drive. The top of the second level is almost at the height of the tree canopy on the Sussex side but higher than most trees on the Earnscliffe side. The angle of view from the grounds of the residence to the building will obscure most of the third level, and due to its setback, most of the mechanical penthouse above (Figure 6 and Figure 36).





The proposed BHC is a modernist building in an international style. The steel-skeleton structure is arranged as a set of rectangular blocks of different heights set perpendicular and parallel to each other. The configuration of the blocks and the creative use of windows and changes in exterior cladding materials (honed limestone, ceramic panels and glass) break up the massing on all elevations and from all angular views. The roof overhangs will be sheathed in tongue and groove wood. Tall vertical windows help define the heights of each block and communicate the office function of the building. An outdoor terrace at ground level is set in the crux of the "T" on the south side (facing the river). A roof terrace graces two sides of the block on the second level, which is recessed in from the west and south edges of the ground level block.

The building arrangement follows a functional program that begins with the main entrance/security gate and continues towards a service wing containing the gardener's store/office and 6 parking spaces below the second level of the building. Most vehicles entering the site will turn into the garage just beyond the parking spaces. Pedestrians will continue to the main lobby and security entrance on the ground floor that appears as a podium supporting the block above (Figure 37). The podium containing the entrance faces the Official Residence.

From the ground level, stairs or elevators can be used to reach the second level, which is composed of two blocks of different heights separated by a passage that is open to the lobby below and contains the elevator bays and stairwell. The northwest block (which forms part of the main elevation of the building) is to be used for storage. The block on the Sussex side features offices and meeting rooms on the second level and reception and office areas on the third level. The offices on the second level open on to the roof terrace above the garage.

The building employs a mix of exterior materials, including white ceramic panels, honed limestone masonry veneer, aluminum frames, clear glass and tongue-and-groove panels. The upper levels are primarily clad in white ceramic panels, while the ground floor is clad in honed limestone and features some glass walls.

Various strategies are used to increase privacy for the Official Residence. Most of the other windows in the new building face towards the Ottawa River and Sussex Drive. The large expanse of windows on the second level facing towards the residence is located in a section of the building that will be used for storage, rather than offices. The terrace on the second level will afford a view towards the river and through trees to the south side of the Official Residence. The terrace is likely to be used in summer only, when the trees in leaf will shield views to the house (Figure 38 and Figure 39).

### 3.2.2 Views and Vistas

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While the Old Office Building, which is visible, is read as subservient to the Official Residence, the new BHC will likely appear as a structure separate in function and history from the residence (Figure 17 and Figure 40). The sharp geometry and bright white cladding of the new building will contrast with the picturesque silhouette of the Official Residence. In winter, however, the combination of limestone and white cladding of the BHC and the snowy cliff face will likely soften the view of the BHC from the river and the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge.



### 3.2.3 Grounds, Parking and Circulation

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The entrance to the property will follow the alignment of the current entrance drive that curves northwest towards a security gate. The hard landscaping will include concrete and asphalt surfaces on the driveways, and cobblestone paving on sidewalks. Some trees will be removed on the south side of the property on the site of the new building.

The new emergency route within the property will extend in a northeast direction from the semi-circular drive in front of the Official Residence to a gate opening onto the NRC parking lot. The current plan calls for permeable pavement to be used for the surface of the route, but the change in the texture and colour created by the new road will be visible in the landscape.

Parking areas are set aside as follows: 17 spaces within a ground-level garage on the south side of the building; 6 spaces between the gardener's store and the entrance to the garage; and 3 spaces at the end of the driveway near the main entrance. Arrangements are being made for additional parking spaces to be accommodated as needed on NRC property. The current landscape plan shows no spaces for maintenance vehicles, such as small tractors, that would be used on a regular basis by the BHC.



## 4 Impact of Proposed Development

### 4.1 General impacts

This section outlines the impacts that might be expected from the project to demolish the Old Office Building and construction a new building at Earnscliffe. The assessment examines the potential impacts on heritage attributes as identified in a summary Statement of Cultural Heritage Value. The impacts are considered within the categories outlined in the table below by examining them against relevant guidance in the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Place in Canada*.

The most relevant standards from the Standards and Guidelines for examining the potential impacts are:

Standard 1: Conserve the heritage value of an historic place. Do not remove, replace or substantially alter its intact or repairable character-defining elements [also known as heritage attributes]. Do not move a part of an historic place if its current location is a character-defining element.

Standard 2: Conserve changes to an *historic place* that, over time, have become character-defining elements in their own right.

Standard 11: 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.

Standard 12: Create any new additions or related new construction so that the essential form and integrity of an *historic place* will not be impaired if the new work is removed in the future.

A set of guidelines specific to cultural landscapes (section 4 in the *Standards and Guidelines*) provide additional advice of relevance to the demolition and construction projects at Earnscliffe.

Category	Comments
Demolition	<p>Summary: The Old Office Building occupies the only site that could be used for a new building without encroaching on the original estate property (Lot O). The demolition of the Old Office Building will diminish the historic associations of Earnscliffe with Ella and Charles Harriss and with the long history of occupancy of the site by the BHC. It will also remove even more evidence of the size and shape of the original lot patterns that were part of Earnscliffe's history, including the period of its associations with Sir John A. Macdonald.</p> <p>Potential impact(s): The Old Office Building is a heritage attribute. The demolition is an adverse impact. Placing the BHC on any other site within the property, however, would do more harm to heritage attributes than using the proposed site.</p>
Alteration of the historic	<p>Summary: The historic place is Earnscliffe, a large estate property with an historic and architecturally significant house on a landscape that includes</p>



fabric	<p>designed and evolved built and landscape components, and a division between the service and residential zones of the site. The proposed development will alter the property's historic fabric by demolishing the Old Office Building, making changes to the landscape and circulation systems on both parts of the property, and replacing a one-and-a-half-story building with a larger and taller one in a contemporary style.</p> <p>Potential impact(s): In addition to removing and altering heritage attributes, the internal hierarchy of the site will change when the BHC opens as the focus of most activities and changes the view to the site and the Official Residence from Sussex Drive.</p> <p>The historic relationship of Lots 13 and 19 to Lot 0 will become less evident with the construction of the BHC because the original land divisions will be lost.</p> <p>Various strategies are being employed in the design of the new building and its landscaping to limit impacts on the Official Residence and its grounds, including shielding views of the house from the new building and privileging privacy concerns in the organization of the grounds. These strategies are very important to retain the Official Residence as a home for the High Commissioner and their family. If the house becomes less desirable as a residence, the risk exists that alternative uses of the house will be needed and that changes required to meet new occupancies will damage its fabric and heritage value.</p>
Views	<p>The views from within the property will change, specifically the views outward from the Official Residence to the south where the much larger BHC is to be built. The impact will be lessened by mature trees standing between the two buildings. Furthermore, the prime views from within the Official Residence are oriented towards the Ottawa River (east and north), rather than towards the new BHC.</p> <p>A sequence of new views will be created along Sussex Drive that will strengthen the street's position as prestigious location for foreign legations.</p> <p>The view of the Official Residence from Sussex Drive will be reduced even further with the addition of a new security building on one side of the gates and the gardener's building on the other.</p> <p>With the construction of the BHC, the primary view of the Official Residence will remain on the river side.</p> <p>Potential impact(s): Views will change due to the height and size of the new BHC and its redevelopment entrance. The changes will help reinforce Sussex Drive as the location for important foreign missions, but they will also change the historic visual hierarchy of the site that made the Old Office Building subservient to the Official Residence.</p>
Vistas	<p>The Official Residence at Earnscliffe is an iconic vista in the architectural category in the Capital from the west and coming south across the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge. The viewshed has been altered from its original appearance by the bridge, but the house continues to loom above</p>



	<p>the Ottawa River as an expression of wealth and prestige. The Old Office Building is barely visible within the vista, and even when it can be seen, it is clearly of secondary importance. The new office building will be a much more visible element in the landscape.</p> <p>Potential impact(s): The proposed design will rival the Official Residence in scale. From the Macdonald Cartier Bridge the geometry of the new office building will be in keeping with the Pearson building, behind it across Sussex Drive, but the sharp geometric profile and bright white upper level may visually separate it from the Official Residence where the Old Office Building's barn-like appearance currently links the two as a single estate. The use of grey limestone as a linking factor will help to mitigate this effect. The contrast may also be softened by mature foliage in the summer and the blending of the white portions of the building with the snowy cliff face in winter. The use of a cladding material with a textural quality could assist in softening the effect, provided the chosen material has a relationship to the Official Residence.</p>
Shadow	<p>The new building's shadows will not fall beyond the line of the former alignment of McKay Street. As a result, the historic grounds of the Official Residence will not be impacted.</p> <p>Potential impacts: No shadow effect.</p>
Land use	<p>The proposed use of the south side of Earnscliffe is consistent with its use from the 1930s to the 1960s as the BHC and its continuing use since then as a service zone. The proposed plan for the BHC makes few allowances for service activities, such as the storage of maintenance vehicles, snow piling, event preparations and materials during periodic maintenance or construction projects.</p> <p>Potential impact(s): The loss of versatile exterior space, such as the space around the current Old Office Building, may result in pushing some services and activities, such as event preparations, parking for delivery vehicles and snow piling on the grounds.</p>

## 4.2 Positive heritage impacts

The potential positive impacts of the proposed development are:

- The development is limited almost entirely to the south portion of the property on the Sussex side of the McKay Street right of way. The development will leave most of the original grounds of Earnscliffe on Lot O intact.
- Various strategies are being used to retain the appeal of the Official Residence as a family home. As examples only, views from within the building towards the residence are very limited and most of the parking spaces are located within the new building area.
- The new BHC will be a handsome, elegant and admired building that is well-suited to its use and symbolic of the importance of the BHC in Canada and the prestige of a location on Sussex Drive.



## 4.3 Adverse heritage impacts

The potential adverse impacts of the proposed development that are addressed in the mitigations section below are:

- The demolition of a building that is associated with a person of historical significance, namely Charles Harriss.
- The change in function of the service quadrant of the landscape as owned and used by owners since 1872, including Sir John A. Macdonald, into an office building that will become the focus of BHC activity on the property.
- Removal of visual clues about the former lot divisions prior to the redevelopment of Sussex Drive by the NCC as part of the Gréber Plan.
- Permanent changes to a landscape that is celebrated and valued as an exceptional example of a Picturesque landscape of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- The potential for activities associated with the new BHC building to damage the historic fabric and picturesque appearance of the grounds associated with the residence.





## 5 Alternatives and Mitigation Strategies

### 5.1 Alternatives

#### 5.1.1 Design of the Building

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The design of the building and the organization of its landscape went through several iterations. Version 7 is being proposed for consideration in the CHIS and for the planning application.

#### 5.1.2 Retaining the BHC on Elgin Street

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The consultant for the CHIS assumes that this option was fully considered by the High Commissioner prior to choosing Earnscliffe as an appropriate location.

#### 5.1.3 Treatment of the Boundary Between the Residential and Service Zones

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Alternatives for the treatment of the edge of the office site to establish a clear distinction between the office and residential portions of the property have been discussed. The option of building a wall or tall fence was rejected in favour of less obtrusive options, such as a hedge.

#### 5.1.4 Parking

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Several parking spaces were planned to be placed facing the BHC within Lot 0 but the plan was rejected in favour of negotiating additional parking spaces on the NRC property.

#### 5.1.5 Mechanical Penthouse

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The mechanical penthouse adds, in effect, a third storey to the building. An alternative was explored that would have included elevator access, which would have increased the footprint and prominence of the penthouse. The current configuration limits the size and height of the mechanical penthouse to the smallest extent possible.

### 5.2 Mitigation.

#### 5.2.1 Delineation of the Office Site

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The architects and landscape architect should re-examine options for marking the north boundary of the office site. Historically, even when the property was already in use by the BHC, fencing was constructed along McKay Street to create a clear division between the residential and service zones of the property. A short stone wall with seating or a short metal fence lined with a hedge might be appropriate.

#### 5.2.2 Heritage Recording

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Consideration should be given to conducting a heritage survey (photography and expert notes on materials and construction) of the Old Office Building and its site prior to demolition.

#### 5.2.3 Conservation Plan for the Landscape

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The historic landscape of Earnscliffe, including the grounds around the Official Residence, circulation systems, living fabric and the cliffs along the Ottawa River could benefit from a strategic heritage conservation plan that would address the full range of conservation stresses on the property and reduce the likelihood that there are unintended negative consequences of



regular property maintenance actions and investments.

#### 5.2.4 Heritage Appreciation

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Continuing public access to Earnscliffe through special programs, such as Doors Open and charity events, should be continued to allow the public to help promote the safeguarding of one of Canada's most significant historic places.

#### 5.2.5 Winter Landscape

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All snow should be cleared from the property, rather than piled on site but especially on the grounds of the residence.



## 6 Conclusion

Earnscliffe is one of the most historically significant properties in Ottawa due to the survival of the residence and its landscape. The house is a well-preserved and beautiful example of Romantic Gothic Revival architecture in Canada and a testimony to the skills of stonemasons and carpenters in Ottawa at the height of the timber trade. The property was owned, occupied and tended by a series of families who have made their marks on national and local history, the most important of which was Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister and a person who was instrumental in the formation of Canada as a country.

Since 1930, the BHC has cared for the house and grounds in full recognition of and respect for the property's heritage value. In the words of former Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, it has been "a good stroke."<sup>43</sup> While the construction of the new BHC will change the landscape, the British High Commission is addressing the heritage value of the property in the design of the new building and its relationship to the Earnscliffe residence and grounds. Further steps should be considered, however, as indicated in the mitigation section of this CHIS.

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<sup>43</sup> While still Prime Minister in 1930, William Lyon Mackenzie King (Liberal) wrote in his diary: "I hear Br. Govt. has purchased Earnscliffe as residence for High Comm'r. This I think is a good stroke." Library and Archives Canada, Diaries of Mackenzie King, 2 February 1930. Online at: [www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/prime-ministers/william-lyon-mackenzie-king/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=12082&](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/prime-ministers/william-lyon-mackenzie-king/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=12082&)



## 7 Figures



Figure 1: Old Office Building, Earnscliffe, September 2019. The building was built c 1900 as a stable and coachhouse. The gambrel-roofed brick building was renovated and expanded as offices for the British High Commission in 1930-1931 with plans by John Albert Ewart. Source: Contentworks.



Figure 2: Garage, Earnscliffe, September 2019. The garage appears to have been built in the early 1970s. Source: Contentworks.







Figure 3: New BHC site, Earncliffe, 2019, with the footprint of the Old Office Building (red arrow). The Source: HOK Architects, Ottawa, 2019.



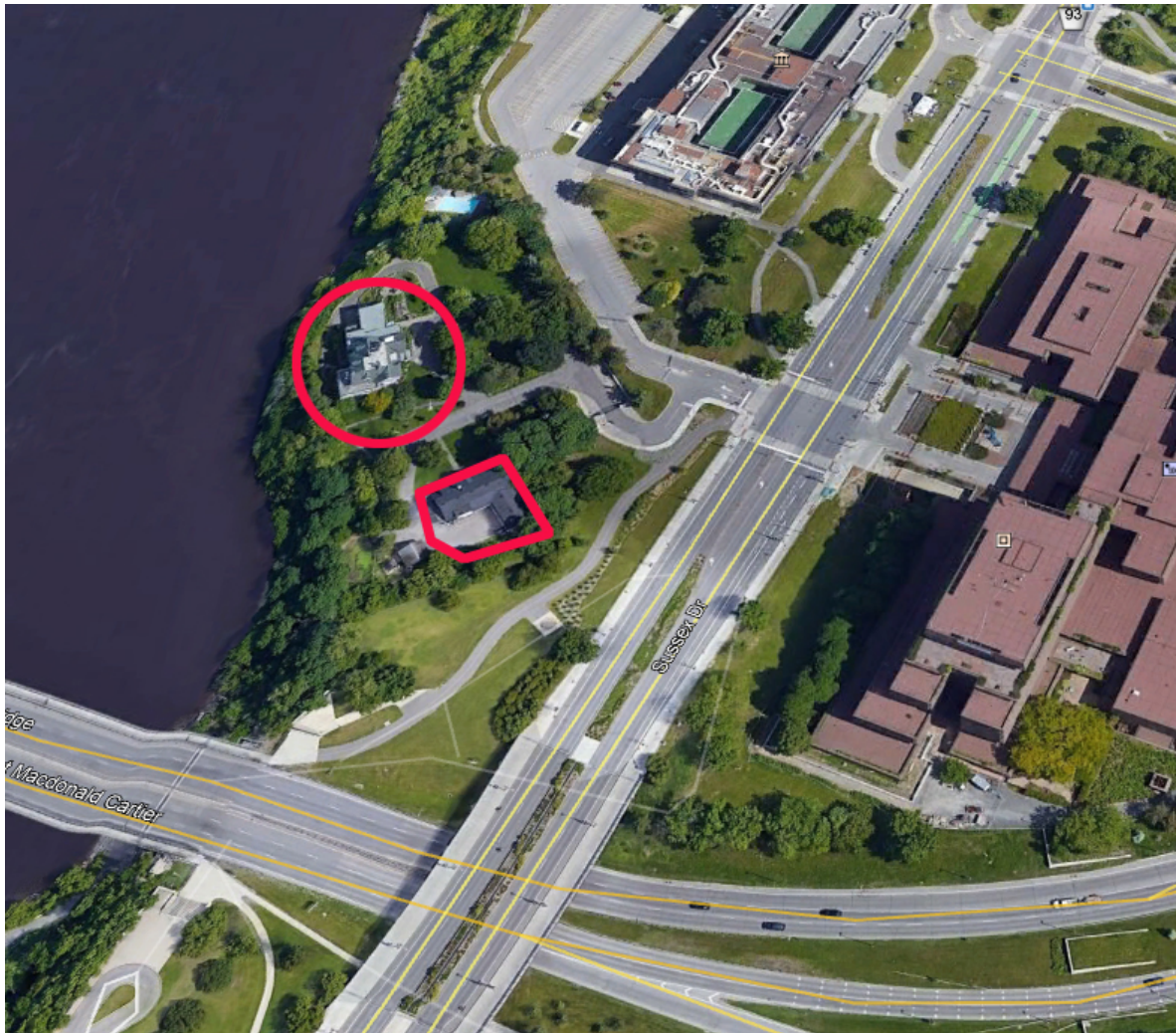


Figure 4: Google Earth view of the property and area with the Earnscliffe residence and the Old Office Building are outlined in red. Source: Google Earth, 2019, annotations by Contentworks.





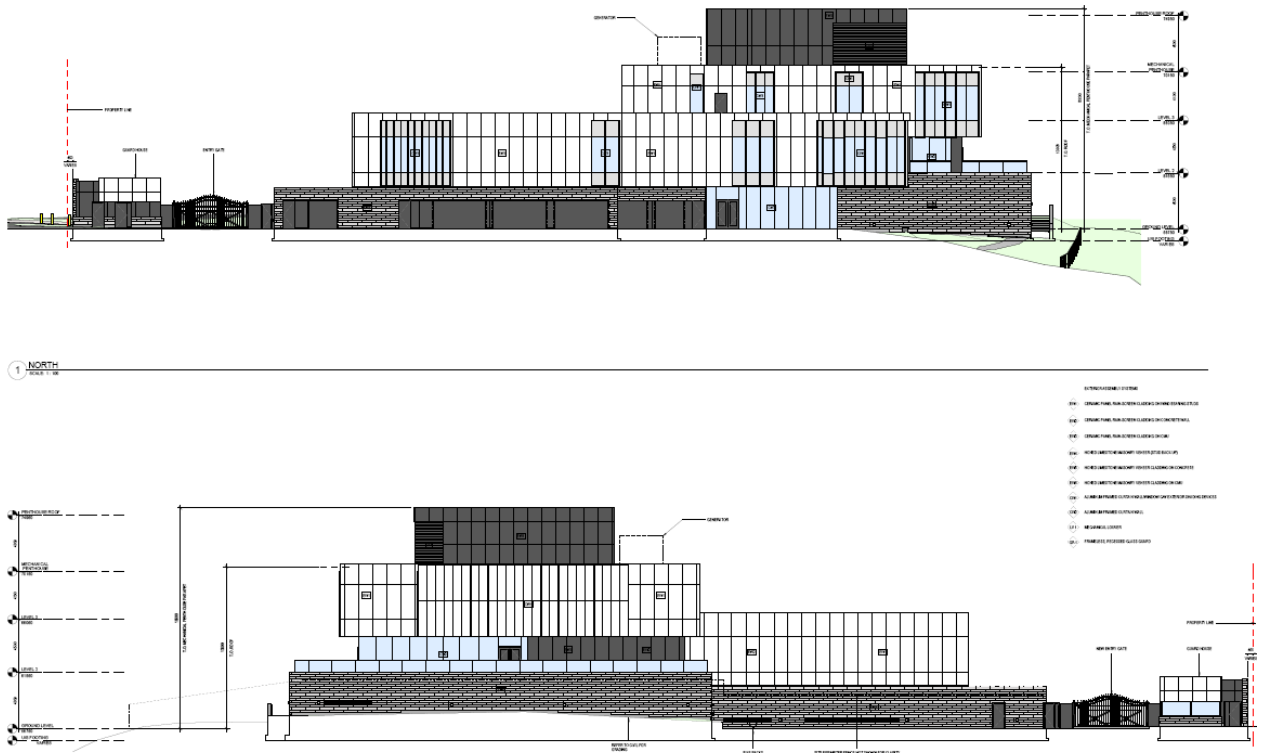


Figure 5: North (top) and south (bottom) elevations for the new office building. Source: HOK International, 25 October 2019.

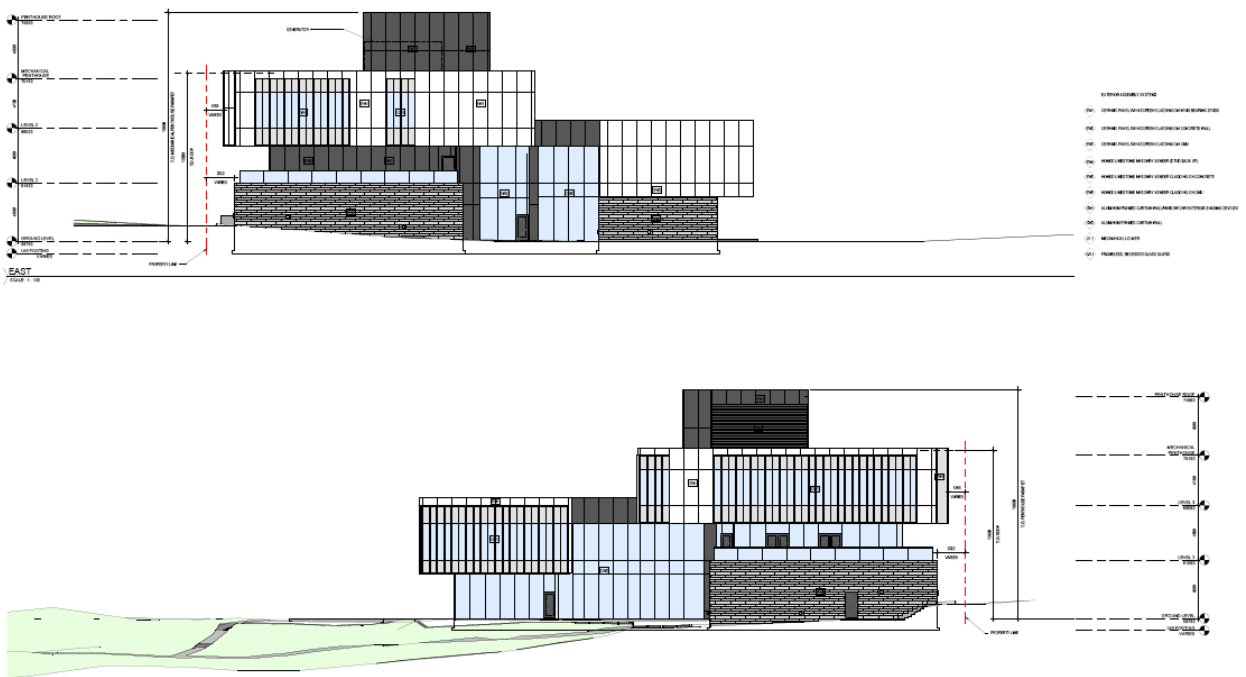


Figure 6: East (top) and west (bottom) elevations for the new office building. Source: HOK International, 25 October 2019.





Figure 7: Office Building at Earnscliffe, 1931. Source: "British High Commission, On Completion of Three Years in Office," *Ottawa Citizen*, 26 September 1931: 22.





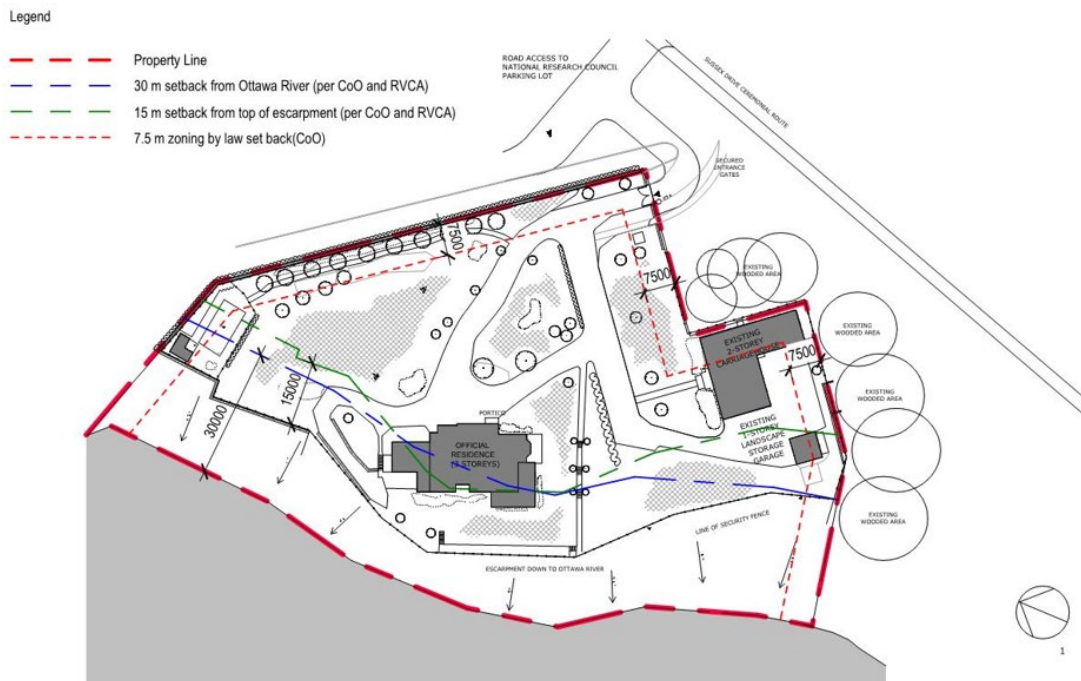
Figure 8: Earnscliffe, home of the British High Commissioner, c. 1940. The house has only received minor changes since this photograph was taken. Source: Library and Archives Canada, C-010371.



Figure 9: Federal properties in the vicinity of Earnscliffe. The arrows mark the outlines of the house and Old Office Building. Source: Directory of Federal Real Property, annotations by Contentworks.







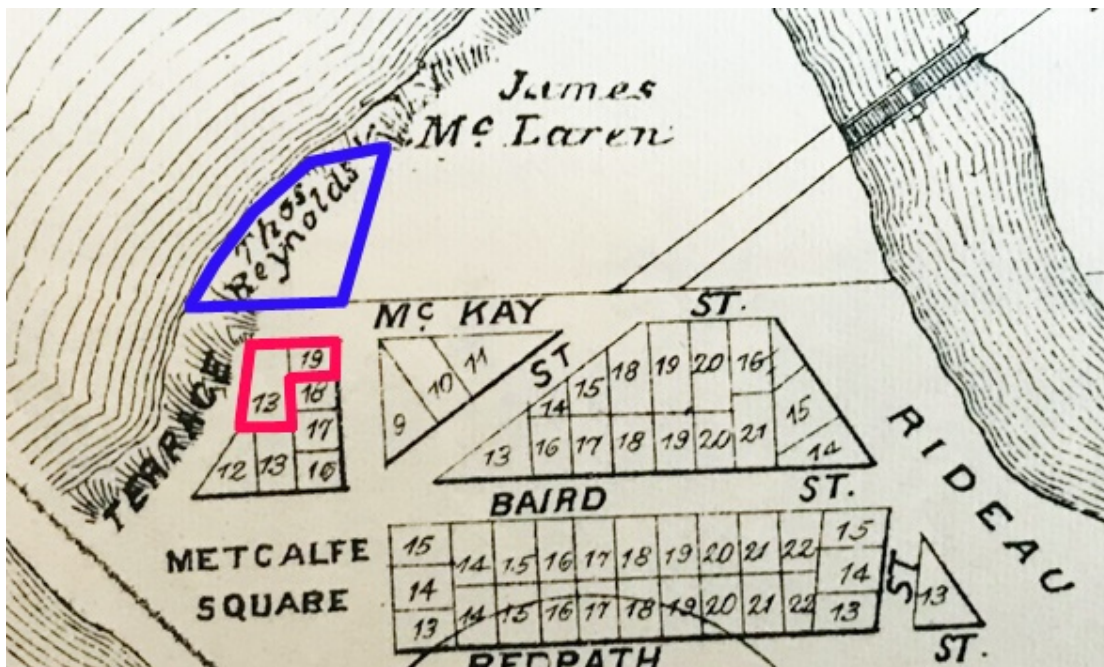


Figure 12: Detail, map showing Thomas Reynolds' property, with the original lot in blue and the lots acquired in 1872 in red (13 and 19). Source: H. Belden & Co. *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the county of Carleton (including city of Ottawa) Ont.* (Toronto: 1879): 9, annotated by Contentworks.



Figure 13: Aerial view of Earnscliffe, 1965 during the construction of the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge. Road alignments changed and numerous buildings were demolished to make way for the bridge and its approaches. The separation of the property into a residential zone around the house and a service zone is evident in this photograph. Source: GeoOttawa.







Figure 14: West end elevation of the Old Office Building, September 2019. Source: Contentworks.



Figure 15: South side of the main block of the Old Office Building and the west elevation of the rear wing, September 2019. Source: Contentworks.







Figure 16: View of the Old Office Building from Sussex Drive. Source: Google streetview, May 2019.



Figure 17: View of Earnscliffe from the Macdonald Cartier Bridge with the residence on the left, the Old Office Building in the middle and the Lester B. Pearson Building on the right. Source: Google streetview, May 2019.



Figure 18: NRC Laboratories, 100 Sussex Drive. Source: Google Streetview, May 2019.





Figure 19: NRC Laboratories, 100 Sussex Drive. Source, in context with the Earncliffe property (arrow). Source: Google Streetview, May 2019. Annotation by Contentworks.



Figure 20: "The side gate of Earncliffe, probably opening onto McKay Street, which then divided the ground round the house from the ground on which the present office is built," 1878. Source: LAC, Canadian High Commission (Great Britain), R219-1-4-E, Photo Album.







Figure 21: Gate (full photo above; detail left) leading to McKay Street from the rear (west) side of Earnscliffe, 1880. The image used is a reversal of a snapshot taken of a glass plate negative. Source: LAC, Topley Studio fonds, R639-0-5-E, Image 3421336, manipulation by Contentworks.



Figure 22: Earnscliffe, while owned by Thomas Reynolds, c. 1872. Source: Topley Studio. Library and Archives Canada, PA-012694.





Figure 23: "Plan Showing Earnscliffe and Adjacent Properties", January 1929, likely to prepare for the sale of the property. The stables are indicated as being of brick construction and detached from the sheds to the back of the Lett house on Dalhousie Street. A fence is shown along McKay Street. Source: British High Commission.

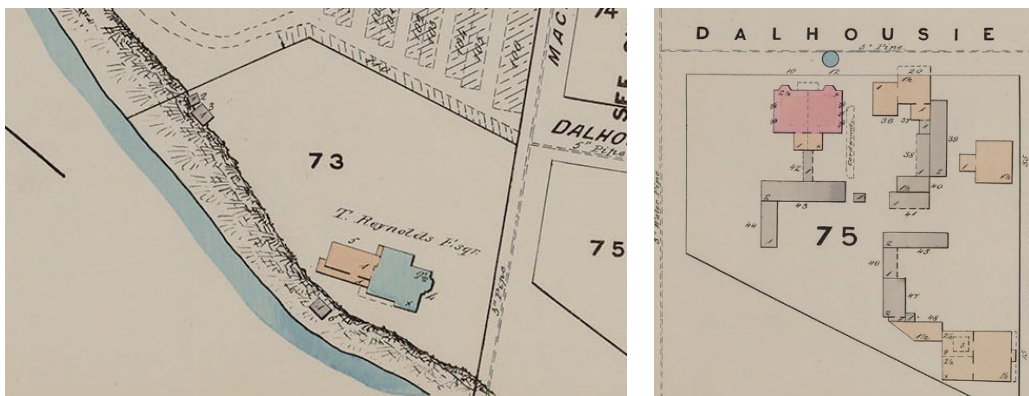


Figure 24: Insurance plan of Ottawa, Ontario, June 1878. Details from sheets 6 & 7 showing Earnscliffe (left) and the Lett House and outbuildings at rear. At this time, structure structures on lot 13 were connected to the Lett property at 10-12 Dalhousie Street. Source: Library and Archives Canada, MIKAN 3824226.





Figure 25: Google Earth mapping tool with KMZ file from Carleton University showing the Fire Insurance Plan for Sheet 111 (Earnscliffe) dated 1895 and Sheet 7 (Dalhousie and McKay ) dated 1888 and unrevised to 1901 in context. The stable shown in the plan is a narrow building of 1 ½ storeys. Source: Google Earth + Carleton University, 2019, annotations by Contentworks.



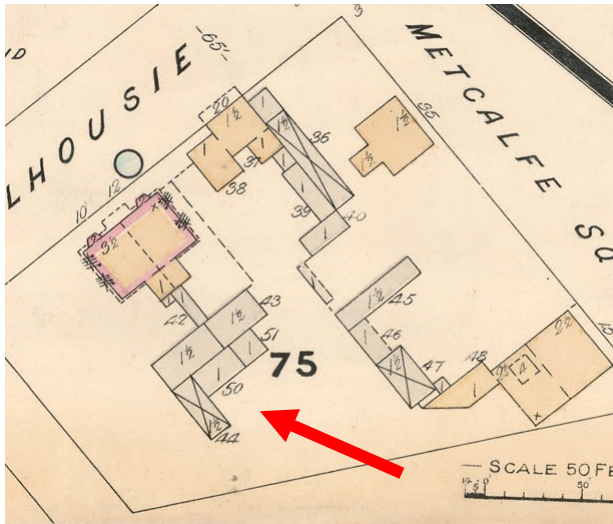


Figure 26: Detail from the 1888 Fire Insurance plan. Grey indicates sheds, X through the building indicates a stable. Source: Carleton University, Fire Insurance Plans. [proper citation needed.]



Figure 27: 1912 Fire Insurance Plan sheets georeferenced in context. The stable shown on the Fire Insurance Plan appears to be very similar in size to the building renovated as offices for the British High. Source: Google Earth + Carleton University, 2019, annotations by Contentworks.





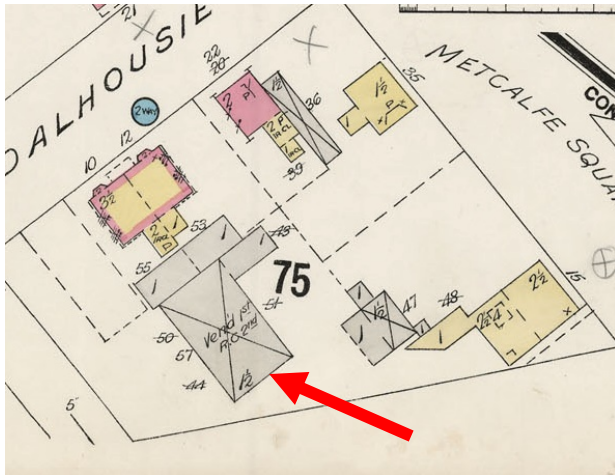


Figure 28: Detail from the 1912 Fire Insurance Plan  
Source: Google Earth mapping tool with KMZ file from Carleton University showing the 1912 Fire Insurance Plan sheets georeferenced in context



Figure 29: Earnscliffe, 1905, with Mrs. Harriss' carriage in front. Source: Topley Studio / Library and Archives Canada / PA-042295.





Figure 30: Aerial view of Earnscliffe, 1928. Note the continued existence of the fence along McKay Street/Earnscliffe Avenue and the path between the house and the stable building across the street. Metcalf Square has also been filled in with two triangular sections of park in this image, and the lumber yards have been removed. Source: geoOttawa.







Figure 31: Aerial view of Earnscliffe, 1933. The CRC Laboratories is complete and McKay St/Earnscliffe Ave has been cut off from the public and the fence along it removed. Additional parking is visible behind the offices in the converted stables. Source: Online collection of aerial photos, A4569\_75, University of Ottawa.



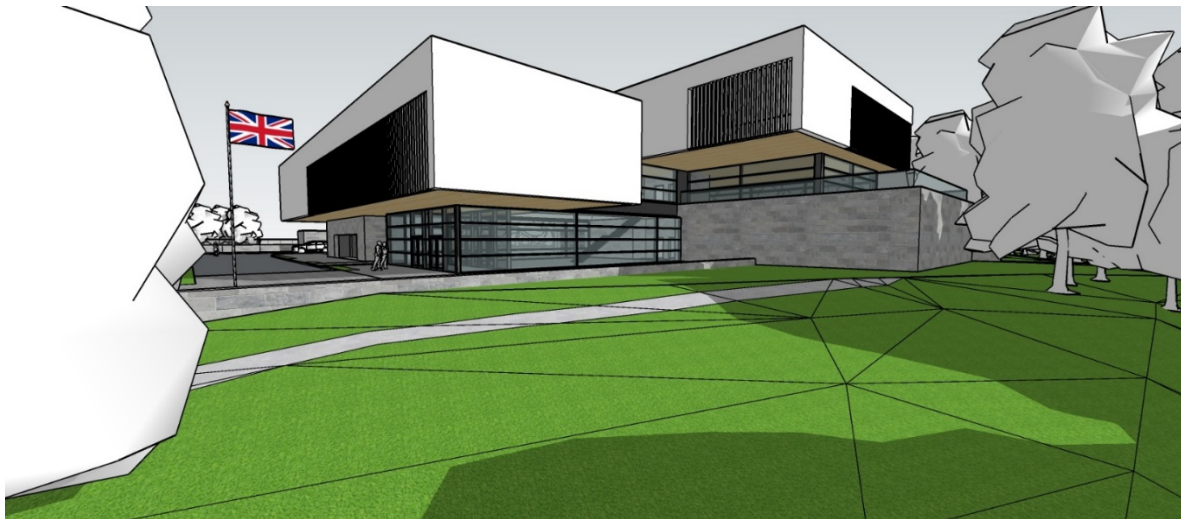
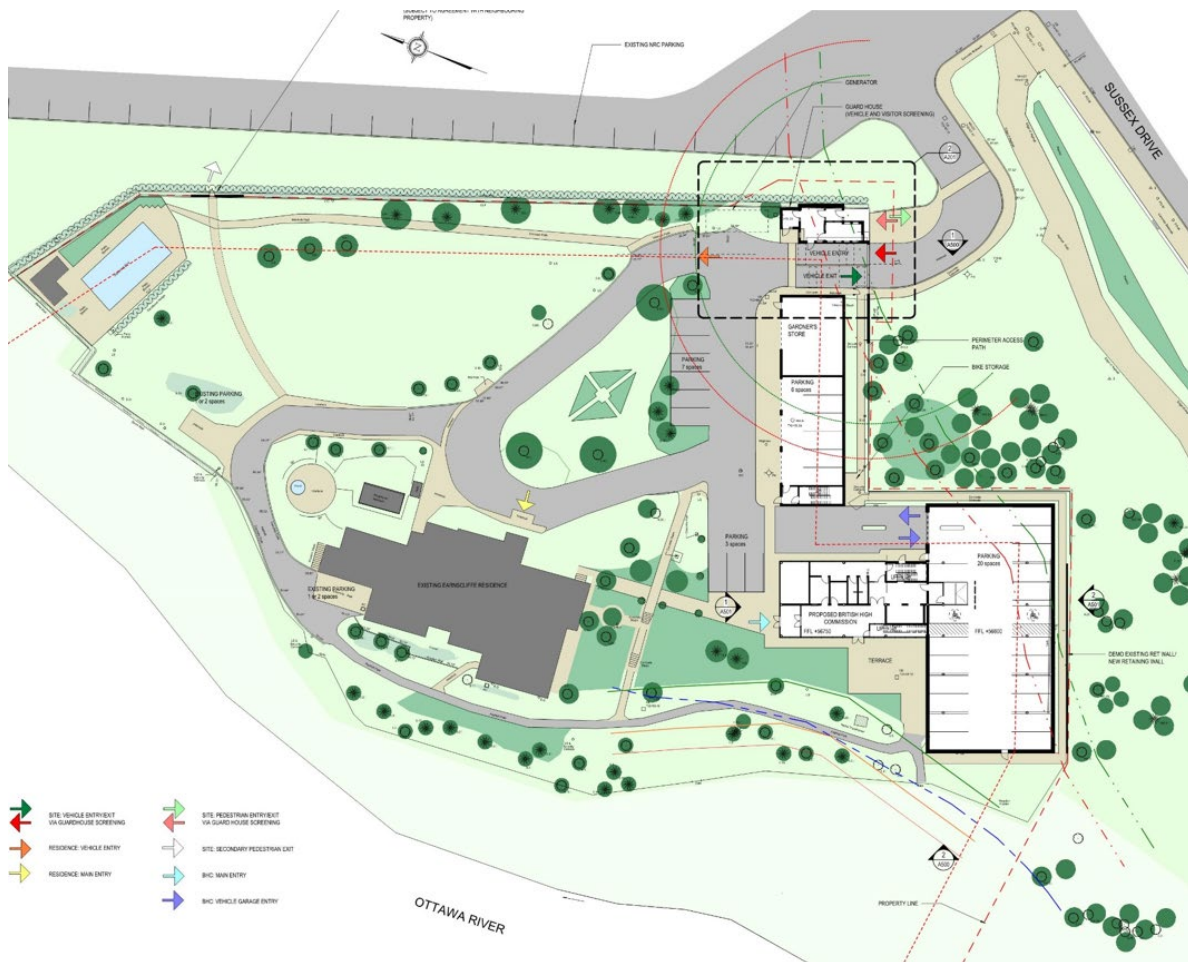


Figure 33: Building massing model. The model does not show the mechanical penthouse. Source: HOK International, 2019.



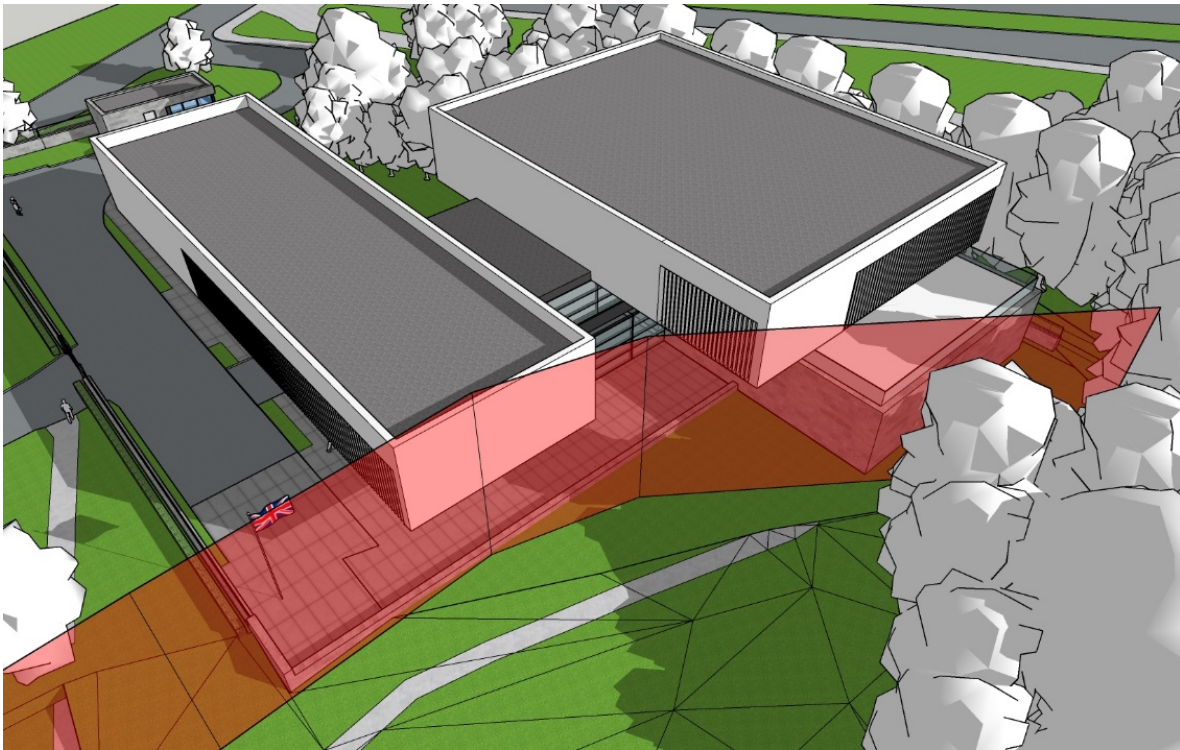


Figure 34: Model for the proposed building showing the required setback from the Ottawa River. The model does not show the mechanical penthouse. Source: HOK International, 2019.



Figure 35: Oblique modeled view of the proposed building looking northwest. This view shows the stone wall and security gate most clearly. Source: HOK International, November 2019.





Figure 36: Building model, view from the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge crossing the Ottawa River. Source: HOK International, November 2019.

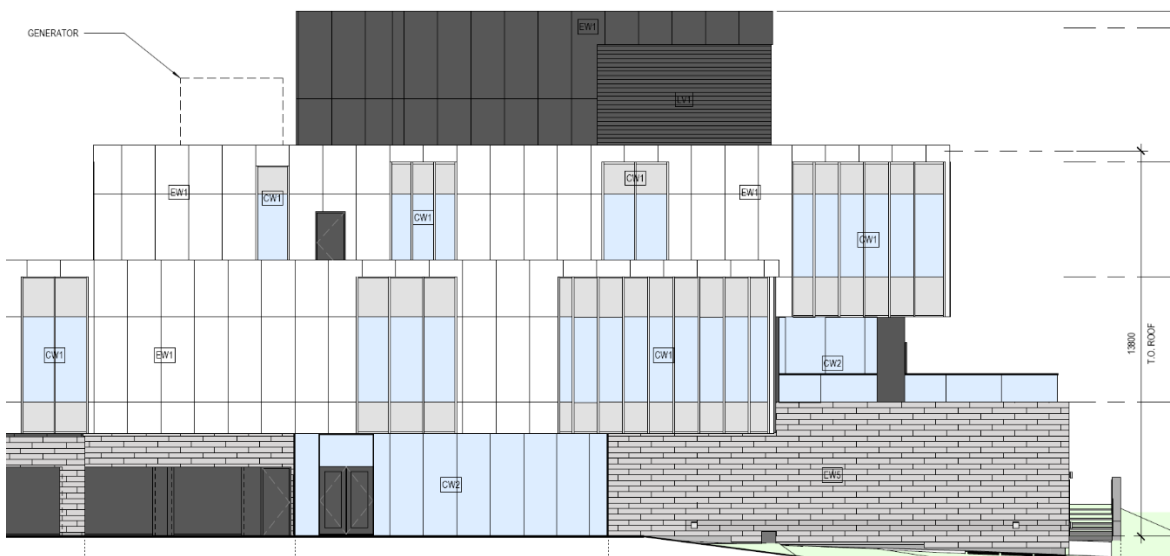


Figure 37: Detail showing the central section of the entrance area (north elevation) of the British High Commission. Source: HOK International, 25 October 2019.







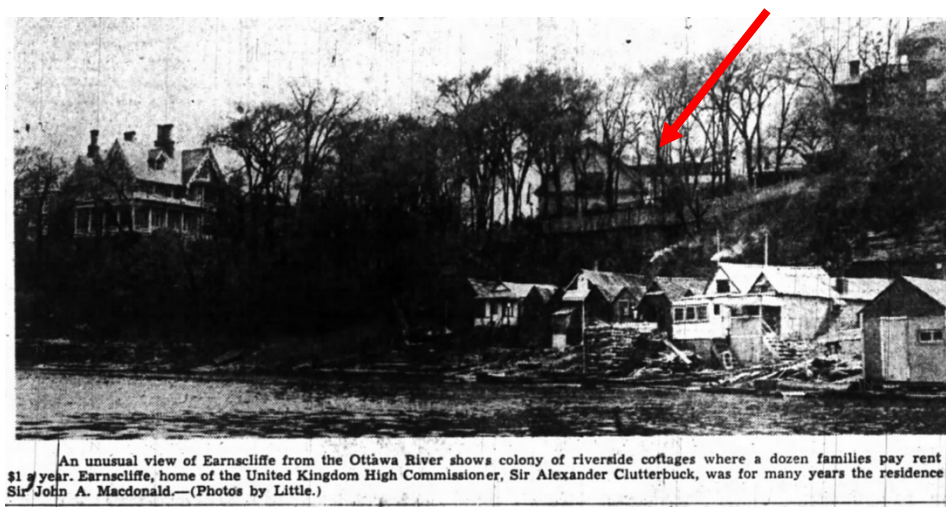
Figure 38. Front gardens, Earnscliffe, with the house on the right and the Old Office Building visible through the trees, September 2019. Source: Contentworks.







Figure 39: View from the sunroom on the south side of the Official Residence towards the Old Office Building. Source: Contentworks, September 2019.



An unusual view of Earncliffe from the Ottawa River shows colony of riverside cottages where a dozen families pay rent of \$1 a year. Earncliffe, home of the United Kingdom High Commissioner, Sir Alexander Clutterbuck, was for many years the residence of Sir John A. Macdonald.—(Photos by Little.)

Figure 40: Earncliffe as seen from the Ottawa River in 1945 with the arrow pointing to the office building. Source: "Dozen Families in Cottage Colony Below Earncliffe," *The Ottawa Journal* (Ottawa: Saturday, May 15, 1948), 17.



## Appendix A

Notice of Intention to Designate, 1981  
No Bylaw Passed

Statement of Reason for Designation- 140 Sussex Avenue

“Earnscliffe”, a two and one-half storey limestone estate residence on Sussex Drive is recommended for designation as being of historical and architectural value. Erected in 1855-57, it was built for John Mackinnon, Manager of the Bank of British North America, and paid for by Thomas McKay, of Rideau Hall, his father in law. Prime Minister Sir. John A. Macdonald resided here from 1883 until his death in 1891. The overall exterior appearance of the house and grounds exemplify stylish Mid-Victorian Gothic design in Ottawa, conservative, yet asymmetric, vertical and decorative.