December 2, 2019

Open Letter to the Ministers Responsible for Heritage in the National Capital

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson,
Minister for Environment and Climate Change
With responsibility for Parks Canada, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the Federal Heritage Review Office and the Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site
House of Commons
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The Honourable Anita Anand,
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Dear Ministers Anand and Wilkinson:

Congratulations on your appointments as Ministers. Your portfolios span responsibilities which have major significance for who we are as Canadians. Of particular concern to Heritage Ottawa is the protection of national historic sites and federally-owned properties, especially here in the National Capital Region.

Here are a few of the issues of greatest urgency.

The previous Minister for Environment and Climate Change (with responsibility for National Historic Sites) stated that the **Central Experimental Farm National Historic Site of Canada** (CEF) needed protection. It still does, as it faces the threat of future encroachment. Heritage Ottawa hopes that you will play a role in conserving this important national treasure.

As well, it has become evident that **24 Sussex**, a Classified Federal Heritage Building, has been woefully neglected for decades, not through any fault of the National Capital Commission but through the

unwillingness of all but Prime Minister Trudeau to be inconvenienced, however briefly, to allow needed repairs and upgrades to take place. As it stands, 24 Sussex may be lost forever.

Then there is the spectacle of the proposed addition to the **Château Laurier National Historic Site of Canada**. While the owners are very welcome to expand the structure within the framework of municipal guidelines, the proposed addition, due to its rampant incompatibility, has sparked a firestorm of protest (proving how deeply Canadians care about their heritage). Experts and the general public alike across the country decry the proposed inappropriate addition that would detract from the most significant heritage building in Ottawa after the Parliament Buildings. Heritage Ottawa and others have encouraged the owners to do better, but with no result.

Protective Measures

Under your leadership, these problems can be addressed. The *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* has no mechanism to protect the nearly 900 national historic sites across the country. While it would be challenging to develop and enforce protection for sites which are owned by others, the Government of Canada could at the very least show leadership by developing and enforcing protective measures for the heritage properties that it owns and manages, through new or amended legislation. Following are a number of suggestions for such legislation:

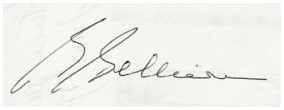
- National historic sites owned by Parks Canada must have a management plan signed by the Minister responsible and tabled in Parliament. Such plans are developed as the result of public and stakeholder involvement; they have benchmarks and timelines for achieving protective results. Requiring such management plans for all federally-owned heritage properties would raise the bar on protection considerably;
- crown corporations have their buildings reviewed by the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO);
- ensure federal protection for archaeological resources on federal land and in waters of federal responsibility;
- owner departments invest 2% of asset replacement value for the maintenance and restoration of federally-owned heritage properties;
- the government give preference to heritage properties where federal accommodations are sought;
- federal actions not threaten heritage properties owned by others;
- ensure statutory protection for Canada's UNESCO World Heritage Sites;
- the government give statutory recognition to the Canadian Register of Historic Places and the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*;
- when federal properties move off the federal inventory, conservation easements and other protective measures be developed to ensure the survival of these heritage properties;
- financial incentives for owners of heritage properties, either in the form of tax incentives or grants programs, be created;
- make a serious effort to support Truth and Reconciliation with changes to the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* to include First Nations, Métis and Inuit representation; commemorate

Aboriginal history with greater robustness; get moving on the Aboriginal Centre across from Parliament Hill.

It is extraordinary and unacceptable that Canada is the only G7 Country that does not have legislative protection for its nationally significant places.

Heritage Ottawa would be pleased to meet with you to discuss these measures to ensure a better future for our built heritage in Ottawa and in Canada.

Yours sincerely,



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