

**JOHN RALSTON SAUL**

**BLOCK 2 ANNOUNCEMENT**

16 MAY 2022

OTTAWA

FOR A GOOD 25 YEARS, I'VE BEEN STARING AT THIS SPACE, TALKING ABOUT IT - ABOUT THE NEED TO COMPLETE PARLIAMENT, ARCHITECTURALLY.

I CLAIM NO CREDIT FOR THE PROJECT ANNOUNCED TODAY. IT'S JUST THAT A LOT OF US HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS TO HAPPEN. PARLIAMENTARIANS AND CIVIL SERVANTS BEGAN FOCUSING YEARS AGO ON THE NEED TO COMPLETE PARLIAMENT SQUARE - TO ENSURE THERE IS THE ROOM NEEDED IN THIS CENTURY FOR THEIR WORK AND THE WORK OF THEIR COMMITTEES - THOSE COMMITTEES WHICH ARE THE MOST POWERFUL TOOLS FOR CITIZENS TO MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD BY POWER.

I WAS EXCITED TO BE INVITED BY THE ROYAL ARCHITECTURAL INSTITUTE OF CANADA AND PSPC TO BECOME INVOLVED AS AN INDEPENDENT ADVISOR. WHAT HAVE I NOTICED IN THIS ROLE?

THE IMPRESSIVE LEADERSHIP OF PSPC.

THE FORMAL ROLE OF THE ROYAL ARCHITECTURAL INSTITUTE OF CANADA AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THIS PROCESS, BRINGING THE INVALUABLE NATIONAL VIEW OF ARCHITECTURE IN CANADA TO THE TABLE.

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THE CREATION OF A LARGE, INDEPENDENT JURY, TO ENSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF ARCHITECTS, PLANNERS AND THINKERS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, WITH ITS CHAIR, BRUCE HADEN, IN VANCOUVER AND ITS DEPUTY CHAIR, ANNE MCILROY, IN TORONTO. TWO HIGHLY RESPECTED ARCHITECTS.

THE IMPORTANT AND INFLUENTIAL ROLE OF INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTS AND OTHER INDIGENOUS LEADERS ON THE JURY.

I AM INSISTING ON ALL OF THESE DETAILS BECAUSE THE INDEPENDENCE AND RIGOUR OF THE PROCESS HAS BEEN IMPRESSIVE.

WE ALL KNOW THAT ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS ARE EXHAUSTING. WINNING ONE IS EVEN MORE EXHAUSTING. YET TODAY - FORGIVE THE CLICHÉ - IS JUST THE END OF THE BEGINNING. THE WINNER IS CHOSEN, THE REAL WORK BEGINS. FOR EXAMPLE, ISSUES OF ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVE DESIGN WILL BE CRUCIAL. EVERYONE IS AGREED ON THAT.

I BEGAN BY MENTIONING PARLIAMENT SQUARE. THIS IS NOT A TERM USED IN OTTAWA. BUT THINGS CHANGE. WELLINGTON STREET IS NOW PEDESTRIAN. I CERTAINLY EXPECT THAT THIS WILL REMAIN, AT LEAST IN THE PARLIAMENTARY AREA. THAT BEING SO, THE NEW FOURTH SIDE WILL BE FULLY INTEGRATED WITH THE OTHER 3 SIDES.

THIS NEW BUILDING MUST ALSO SPEAK - ARCHITECTURALLY - FOR OUR TIME. OUR ERA. THE EAST AND WEST BLOCKS CAME OUT OF THE 1860S - ABOUT A CENTURY AND A HALF AGO. THE CENTRE BLOCK AND THE PEACE TOWER OUT OF THE 1920S - A CENTURY AGO. AND NOW, THE NEW SOUTH BLOCK WILL HAVE TO SPEAK FOR US IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY.

THIS IS A REMINDER OF TWO KEY POINTS RARELY MENTIONED BY OUR LEADERS AND COMMENTATORS. FIRST, CANADA IS THE OLDEST CONTINUOUS

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DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION IN THE WORLD. WE ARE NOT NEW. SECOND, WE ARE AN OLD STABLE DEMOCRACY. ONE OF THE 2 OR 3 OLDEST CONTINUOUS DEMOCRACIES OF ANY SORT IN THE WORLD. WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT HERE IS THE ARCHITECTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN CANADA.

OF COURSE, THIS NEW BUILDING WILL HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE OTHER 3 BLOCKS WHICH IT IS JOINING. NOT THROUGH IMITATION OR PASTICHE. YOU WILL SEE AN ELEGANT, SIMPLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, WITH THE COPPER WINDOW CASINGS OF THE NEW BUILDING - A TIP OF THE HAT TO THE COPPER ROOFS SO IDENTIFIED BY ALL CANADIANS WITH THE EXISTING PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS. FINALLY, THERE IS THE ROLE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY LAWN IN THIS STORY.

APRIL 25, 1849, CANADA'S PARLIAMENT, THEN IN MONTRÉAL, WAS BURNT DOWN BY AN ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MOB. ONLY 18 YEARS LATER, THESE THREE EXTRAORDINARY BUILDINGS IN OTTAWA WERE THROWN UP BY A COUNTRY - AND A DEMOCRACY - IN THE MAKING. AN UNEXPECTED, ALMOST OVER-THE-TOP ASSERTION OF SELF-CONFIDENCE.

BUT MOST EXTRAORDINARY, THEY WERE ALL BUILT AROUND AN ENORMOUS LAWN. ITS ONLY PURPOSE WAS AND REMAINS AS A PLACE FOR CITIZENS TO GATHER TO CELEBRATE, TO MOURN, PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT, TO PROTEST.

OUR STORY, OUR HISTORY HAS UNFOLDED ON THAT LAWN.

AND NOW, THAT PUBLIC SPACE - THAT GREAT LAWN OF THE CITIZENRY - WILL BE COMPLETED, SO THAT OUR PARLIAMENTARIANS WILL BE ABLE TO SEE AND HEAR US, ON ALL SIDES, SPEAKING UP FOR OUR DEMOCRACY.

MIIGWECH, MERCI, THANK YOU.