

Office of the Chief Executive Officer · Bureau de la première dirigeante

April 11, 2008

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Committee Secretary:

As Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Capital Commission (NCC) in Canada's Capital Region, the National Capital Authority's (NCA) counterpart agency in Canada, we would like to provide input on the Joint Committee's inquiry regarding the role of the Authority.

Canada's National Capital Commission is a crown corporation responsible to Parliament for guiding the development of federal lands in the Capital over the long-term. The NCC's legislated mandate allows it to intervene in the areas of 1) planning, design and land use 2) real asset management and 3) animation and promotion of the Capital. This mandate has permitted the NCC to add a Capital "overlay" to a large region that stretches across two provinces and contains seven municipalities (in particular, two large urban agglomerations), two official languages and a culturally diverse population of 1,148,800 people. This region is also the seat of the federal government. It is the NCC that makes the difference here, working on behalf of the federal government, between an ordinary civic space and an extraordinary Capital for all Canadians – one that evolves in step with the country and its people.

The NCC has had a longstanding relationship with Canberra and the Authority, exchanging information and staff, welcoming NCA representatives and organizing events that feature Australia. In 2001, our predecessors joined with the Chief Executive of the NCA, and colleagues from planning authorities in Washington and Brasilia to launch the Capitals Alliance network to provide a global forum for senior planners and urban designers in capital cities around the world.

Through Capitals Alliance, planners and public policy officials exchange ideas and solutions with international colleagues on the unique challenges facing national capitals. The NCA's contribution to the Alliance has been invaluable. In fact, the NCA's work in the areas of long-term planning, commemorations and building the Capital "in the hearts of all Australians" has served as an example for other Alliance members including the NCC.

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We would like to offer our views on the unique role of federal planning organizations in meeting the development needs of national capitals and their relationship with their local governments. National capitals are special cities, because planning for municipalities that have a federal seat of government often involves political and symbolic concerns distinct from those of other urban areas. National capitals are tasked with representing a whole country, embodying its hopes and aspirations and inspiring its people as well as providing effective spaces for the important functions of the Capital.

During the NCC's visit to Canberra in January 2007, as part of the 5th Capitals Alliance meeting hosted by the NCA, representatives of our delegation met Authority leaders as well as local and territorial planning representatives, and it was interesting to see the many similarities between our two capitals. The evolving and dynamic relationship between the Authority and the local territorial establishment was quite evident. As with the NCC in Canada, the Authority seeks to advance Australian interests in a way that contributes to local planning and development policies while building pride and unity amongst all Australians. It is important to seek partnerships that benefit both federal and local needs.

In this respect, the NCC has developed a strong partnership with the cities of Ottawa (Ontario) and Gatineau (Quebec) by establishing a National Capital Tripartite Planning Committee that includes the mayors of both municipalities. It addresses joint planning, design, development and programming initiatives. For example, it has provided the impetus for collaboration between the NCC and the City of Ottawa to harmonize our views protection concerning the policy in regards to municipal zoning height control. This has provided value added urban design of both the civic and capital realms in downtown Ottawa.

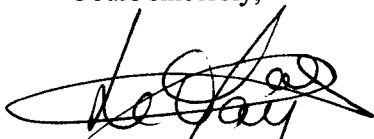
While working to harmonize its activities with local governments, the NCC also achieves national perspective through its Board of Directors and its Advisory Committees. The NCC Board of Directors is made up of 15 members, including a Chair and CEO, eight (8) who must come from other regions of Canada, and five (5) from the Capital region. The NCC recruits recognized experts from Canada's professional, academic and business communities to serve on Advisory committees in the areas of Planning, Design and Realty; Communication, Marketing and Programming; Official Residences. This is an effective mechanism for ensuring that the highest standards of planning, design, stewardship and programming are achieved for the Nation's most symbolic sites.

Australia and Canada are vast, relatively young and diverse countries. The work of building a Capital requires foresight and continuity and long term commitment. The NCC, like the NCA in Canberra, is also working to build a Capital that represents and expresses the national values. Much has been achieved, and as we move into the 21st century, Canada is changing and our organization must adapt to respond to many demographic, social and economic influences. What remains constant is the NCC's commitment to help shape and express the Capital as a Canadian model of cultural diversity. In today's World, this is a mission of considerable importance.

To accomplish this, the NCC has been given a mandate broader than the NCA's that includes not only planning, development and maintenance but also programming, events, marketing, interpretation and outreach responsibilities. It is our belief that, although the specific mandates of organizations responsible for Capital cities may differ, the importance of such authorities whose prime role is to focus on the unique functions of a National Capital, has stood the test of time.

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very interesting and challenging issue. On a personal note, we have been highly impressed with the professionalism, level of expertise and leadership of the National Capital Authority, as well as its clear sense of direction, its mission and its dedication to planning and developing a national capital that reflects the values and aspirations of the Australian people.

Yours sincerely,



Marie Lemay, P.Eng., ing.
Chief Executive Officer



Russell Mills
Chairman of the Board of Directors