

### ***West Block rehabilitation architects welcome MPs to their new home***

(Ottawa January 28<sup>th</sup>) Today, Canada's Members of Parliament will gather for the first time to debate in the House of Commons housed under the spectacular glass roof addition to the new West Block. The new West Block represents one of North America's most important and technically challenging rehabilitation projects and has produced an iconic and functional design blending architectural daring and Parliament's cherished Gothic Revival style in a space that will inspire Canadians for generations.

Architecture49 and EVOQ, two Canadian firms, who have led the design and reimagination of the new West Block welcomed MP's and staff to their new home and thanked government partners and the thousands of experts from across Canada who contributed to the success of the project.

"Today's milestone is the culmination of many years of hard work," said James Bridger of Architecture49 who led the implementation team. "Behind our collective success was the expertise and ingenuity of thousands of building specialists, tradespeople and artisans from across Canada who came together in a collaborative process rivaling the finest-tuned symphony orchestra."

"While the glass roof and new structure within the existing courtyard will be the focus for most, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the entire West Block has been completely overhauled and its systems upgraded for the first time in 50 years," said Georges Drolet, of EVOQ and the lead design architect. "The new West Block is not only beautiful and daring- it is a highly functional building with the latest technologies that our elected representatives will use for generations."

"The West Block is a landmark building which played a key role in Canada's development," said Rosanne Moss of EVOQ who oversaw the heritage rehabilitation. "Our priority was to remain true to the heritage character of the West Block and the parliamentary precinct throughout the rehabilitation process. We hope that MP staff and the entire parliamentary community are inspired by the historic legacy of the building as they help write the next chapter of Canada's story."

The following representatives from EVOQ & Architecture49 are available for interviews.

- **James Bridger, Principal** of Architecture49 who lead the implementation team
- **Rosanne Moss, Director** of EVOQ who oversaw the heritage rehabilitation
- **Georges Drolet, Director** of EVOQ and the lead design architect

#### **About Architecture49:**

Architecture49 is a national leader in the integrated design and delivery of some of Canada's most important buildings. Across the country, we create inspiring and award-winning spaces that elevate the history, social fabric and health of our communities. With over 250 staff of Architects, Planners, Interior Designers and Landscape Architects, we harness the strength of a multi-disciplinary view to influence design that is culturally, environmentally and geographically sensitive to the varied and unique characteristics of our country and our clients.

We have established a reputation as being strong collaborators with the ability to balance design innovation with the practicality of local conditions, cost structures, and schedule requirements. With

offices from coast to coast across Canada, Architecture49's work spans over three-quarters of a century of profoundly significant contributions to cities and communities. A49 has focused expertise in the delivery of complex projects and is proud to have been part of the team to deliver West Block of Parliament.

**About EVOQ Architecture:**

EVOQ is an award-winning architecture firm recognized for quality interventions and site sensitive design solutions. Our name, EVOQ, is also our conviction that architecture should be an expression of meaning. As contextual architects, we are always looking at the broader picture, respecting the history, culture and location of each project to inform our design process. Our purpose is to create a link between past, present and future with creativity and nuance. The firm, formerly known as FGMDA, was first established in 1996, following the merger of two offices founded in 1983. In 2016, we incorporated and changed our name to EVOQ Architecture. We specialize in heritage conservation and Inuit and First Nations architecture, with additional expertise in residential and commercial projects and heritage planning.

**To set up an interview with one of the spokespeople, please contact:**

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**Backgrounder**

**Rehabilitating a Landmark Building: The Commission of a Lifetime**

What began, for Architecture49 and EVOQ, as a restoration project for the West Block, the oldest of the three Parliamentary Buildings, evolved into the commission of a lifetime and one of North America's most important rehabilitation projects: reimagining a temporary home for the House of Commons- the seat of Canada's democracy.

Built in 3 campaigns between 1865 and 1910, the West Block was last renovated over 50 years ago. Since that time, standards of operating and working in a parliamentary office building have evolved to include greater security requirements, integrated and advanced communication networks, energy efficiency, universal accessibility, broadcasting requirements and public engagement programs. In addition, previous renovations had obscured or removed many important heritage characteristics of the West Block.

The project demanded both expertise in heritage conservation and the creativity and architectural ingenuity to successfully overhaul the existing structure and upgrade all building systems, while remaining true to the historic integrity of the West Block and its adjacent parliamentary buildings.

Limited architectural plans and archival material surviving the original West Block building necessitated careful research and an understanding of the period to refurbish existing interior spaces in the spirit with which they were originally intended – but in a more contemporary design. A significant shortage of skilled tradespeople necessitated ongoing training to develop qualified professionals and successfully complete the project.

Architecture49/EVOQ led the project to meet complex stakeholder requirements with a collaborative approach that leveraged expertise from across Canada reflective of the dignity of Parliament and its members. They managed a large project team of building professionals, tradespeople and artisans during every stage of the rehabilitation and construction. Finally, Architecture49/EVOQ worked with manufacturers to develop and refine unique products that would be integrated into the building to achieve the dual goal of modernization and heritage conservation.

### **A New Design Icon**

The new West Block is an iconic and functional design blending architectural daring and Parliament's cherished Gothic Revival style to create a space that will inspire Canadians for generations. The innovative, self-supporting glass roof designed to cover the West Block's courtyard is an architectural feat which will not only provide a home for the House of Commons over the next decade but serves as an example of Canadian ingenuity and world-class architecture. Moreover, it demonstrates how contemporary and traditional architecture and design can co-exist, engaging in a dialogue between past and present.

It is an achievement in respectfully blending rehabilitation/restoration with a modern overhaul of infrastructure and systems and speaks to the importance of taking the right approach to preserving Canada's architectural heritage.

The custom designed, contemporary structural columns and self-supporting glass roof provide a counterpoint to the surrounding Gothic Revival architecture while satisfying both National Building Code performance and Parks Canada Standards and Guidelines for Conservation. The newly-enclosed courtyard is a state-of-the-art, broadcast-ready interior space that overcomes the acoustic challenges posed by an "open air" environment. This much needed upgrade will allow parliamentarians to function and thrive in a 21st century landscape – the driving impetus for the West Block Rehabilitation. It also marks the successful completion of phase one of the Government of Canada's Long-Term Vision and Plan for the Parliamentary Precinct.

### **Copper roof & new windows**

3,500 square metres of copper roofing were installed on the roof. The indoor roofs of the West Block were fitted with oxidized copper roof panels taken from other areas to match the stately character of the building rather than install new copper that would not oxidize under the glass roof. More than 1,350 new windows were made-to-measure with original details were installed.

### **Algonquin College Apprentices Program**

Given a shortage of masons and other trade skills, the project partnered with Algonquin College to identify and train hundreds of young Canadians, whose skills will be transferred to Centre Block and other rehabilitation projects. At its peak, more than 200 masons worked on the building daily. Twenty-eight chimneys and two spires were dismantled and completely rebuilt.

### **Opportunity for young women**

The construction sector is traditionally overwhelmingly male. Tradespeople working on the West Block rehabilitation, however, were 30 per cent women.

## Stonework

Almost half of the building's 140,000 stones had to be removed, numbered and reinstalled. About 19,000 stones were replaced. Laser technology was used to clean the stone by vaporizing the contaminants and providing a uniformly clean surface.

## Geological support

Workers blasted through 28 Olympic-sized swimming pools worth of bedrock to create new underground levels that extend below the House Chamber. The building received seismic and structural reinforcement to better withstand earthquakes including 10,000 rock anchors. More than 1.4 million new bricks were laid inside the building to reinforce its structure.

## Interior Preservation

Of the entire building, only 3 original main stairs and entrances, the Mackenzie tower office and some fragments of baseboard and cornices were all that remained of the original heritage characteristics of the West Block after the 1960's renovation. Careful research into the history of the building and precedents of similar buildings of the period culminated in a conservation strategy that won approval from all stakeholders. The strategy guided the work from macro elements such as circulation patterns to smaller scale items including carpet and tile, custom-designed light fixtures and millwork for doors, casings and cabinet work.

## The Glass Roof

2,600 square metres of glass were installed on the roof. The roof is supported by 20 steel columns that rise-up like giant trees surrounding the House of Commons Chamber. The glass and aluminum ceiling has mechanical louvers to control the level and dispersion of light in the Chamber. Acoustic tiles hidden in the ceiling will ensure broadcast-quality sound transmission.

## Environmental Sustainability

More than 2,900 tons of asbestos-containing material was removed from the building. In the winter, the heat collected at roof level is captured and recirculated to warm other areas, making the building more energy efficient. The new Chamber features LED lighting, which will help save energy and reduce the government's carbon footprint. Public Services and Procurement Canada were guided by key principles of Green Globes and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver criteria through the implementation of various sustainability measures.