

Ottawa's Former War Museum to Become New Pluralism Centre

The former Dominion Archives Building/Canadian War Museum in Ottawa is to become the Global Centre for Pluralism, a new international centre for research, education and exchange about the values, practices and policies that underpin pluralist societies.

This past October, the federal government announced a partnership agreement with the Aga Khan, a renowned philanthropist and spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims around the world, that will make this designated national historic site and 'Classified' heritage building—the highest federal rating—available on a long-term lease.

Located on Sussex Drive, its neighbours include several embassies, the magnificent National Art Gallery, The Royal Canadian Mint and the residences of the Prime Minister and Governor General.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Canadian government will contribute \$30 million towards the establishment of the centre's endowment fund. The Aga Khan will contribute a minimum of \$30 million toward the endowment and the refurbishing of the former museum. The Canadian War Museum vacated the premises in 2004 to relocate to a grand new building on Lebreton Flats.

The project will involve a major restoration and rehabilitation of the heritage building, including cleanup of any asbestos, an update of the electrical system and construction of new interior walls. Health and safety upgrades to the building will cost \$5 million to \$20 million.

Under the government's heritage rules, the building must be offered first to government agencies. If those agencies decline, private companies are given a chance to bid on the site. The Royal Canadian Mint and the National Gallery of Canada initially expressed interest, but did not follow through with offers on the property.

The original structure, built between 1904 and 1906 in the Tudor Revival style, was operated as the Dominion Archives. An addition to the south side of the building was completed in 1925. The war museum moved into the location in 1967, when the archives relocated to a new site on Wellington Street.

Prince Karim Aga Khan, a Geneva-born, Harvard-educated British citizen living in France, said he wants to see Canada share its pluralist values globally. "Tolerance, openness and understanding towards other peoples' cultures, social structures, values and faiths are now essential to the very survival of an interdependent world," he said. "I am fascinated by Canada's experience as a successful pluralist society."

Registered under Canadian law as a non-denominational, bilingual, non-profit organization, the Global Centre for Pluralism will be guided by an independent board of directors made up of leading Canadians and high-profile individuals from around the world. The board will be jointly constituted by the Aga Khan Development Network and the Government of Canada. His Highness the Aga Khan will lead the board as chairman.

The Ottawa Citizen, *Ont.*, 10/25/06; *CBC.ca news.*