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Royal Architectural Institute of Canada  
Institut royal d'architecture du Canada

August 6, 2020

**The Honourable David Eby**

Attorney General

[AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

**The Honourable Anne Kang**

Minister of Citizens' Services

[Anne.Kang.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Anne.Kang.MLA@leg.bc.ca)

Dear Honourable David Eby and Honourable Anne Kang,

I am writing to express the deep concern of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) upon hearing of the decision to convert The Law Courts Inn restaurant, an important and publicly accessible architectural space designed by the late Arthur Erickson, into private offices. Having reviewed the letters written by Adam Howden-Duke, President of The Lawyers Inn Society and the Arthur Erickson Foundation (AEF), as well as having spoken with Steve Chamli, General Manager of The Law Courts Inn, we stand firmly behind the call for an open and informed consultation process, before a decision is made around The Law Courts Inn change of use and design.

The RAIC is the leading voice for excellence in the built environment in Canada, demonstrating how design enhances the quality of life, while addressing important issues of society through responsible architecture. The RAIC's mission is to promote excellence in the built environment and to advocate for responsible architecture. As such, we fully support the AEF in its own mission to advocate for the respectful stewardship of Erickson's physical works, including his buildings and landscapes, of which the Law Courts Inn and its reflecting pond are a part of.

Arthur Erickson is arguably one of Canada's most important architectural figures, and his buildings represent a significant contribution not only to Canadian architecture, but architecture at large. Erickson's work has been critically recognized through the awarding of six Massey medals, three Governor General's Awards, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Gold Medal, the American Institute of Architects Gold Medal, the French Academy of Architecture Gold Medal, and the Order of Canada. Notable projects include the Canadian Pavilion at the Osaka World's Fair, Robson Square in downtown Vancouver, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, the Canadian Chancery in Washington DC, and the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington.

Speaking specifically to design of the Law Courts Inn, its linear, modern, and naturally lit interior is a signature of Erickson's design ethos. Other important features include the proportions of the space, elevated ceiling heights, floor to ceiling windows, use of material – specifically exposed concrete, structural bays that delineate the space, angled clerestory windows, and the juxtaposition of the order of



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the interior space and the organic nature of the exterior garden, complete with a linear reflecting pond only accessible from this space. These are all trademarks of Erickson's work.

The value that would be lost should such a modification of the space proceed, is not something that could be undone, and thus the onus of this decision is not one that should be taken without much thought or consultation. For this reason, the AEF, formed to protect and promote Erickson's work and legacy, includes a Stewardship Council that provides building owners and related authorities with advice on the management of Erickson works, including those seeking to undergo architectural alternations and interventions.

Accordingly, the RAIC supports the AEF and The Lawyers Inn Society's call for the Attorney General to "reconsider this decision and allow a reasonable opportunity for a consultation among stakeholders", and to consider "the prospect of delaying the implementation of any decision, until a consultative process around the proposed change in use of the space is made."

The importance of public consultation, and the protection and preservation of significant architectural works and spaces that tell the history of our country, is something that cannot be understated. Therefore, the RAIC would be willing to participate in a consultation process if invited. We believe that such a work of architecture, and the value it is evidenced to add to the community, would be worth the effort to participate.

We look forward to your fully considered response to our request for review of this important matter.

Sincerely,

John Brown, AAA, FRAIC  
President, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada

CC:

**Sunny Dhaliwal**, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Citizens' Services ([Sunny.Dhaliwal@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Sunny.Dhaliwal@gov.bc.ca))

**Philip Boname**, President, the Arthur Erickson Foundation ([info@aefoundation.ca](mailto:info@aefoundation.ca))

**Adam Howden-Duke**, President of The Lawyers Inn Society ([ahd@guildyule.com](mailto:ahd@guildyule.com))

**Steve Chamli**, General Manager of The Law Courts Inn ([contact@lawcourtsinn.com](mailto:contact@lawcourtsinn.com))

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