

**Ottawa: Canada's Literary Capital****Our Vision**

Great nations have always taken great pride in their literary achievements. Canada is no exception — throughout Ottawa's history as a national capital, citizens and cultural leaders have envisioned the city as a site for national literary expression and commemoration. Exemplifying that vision in October 1896, an editorial in *The Lounger*, an Ottawa periodical, proclaimed:

"It is about time that we in Canada should consider keeping alive the memories of the many men and women, who, by their literary or other gifts, have added in some degree, more or less, to the development of our culture and intelligence. Should there not be some place in the Dominion—and what more fit place than Ottawa—where not only samples of their worth might be found or consulted, but where memorials of them might be preserved."

A memorial site honouring Canadian literary achievement would fulfill the vision expressed by several of the architects of Confederation, and of the many writers of national importance who have called Ottawa home.

**Thomas D'Arcy McGee, 1867:**

"... if 'stone walls do not a prison make,' still less do they make a capital—a ruling city—a seat of light and guidance, and authority, to a nation or a generation. When the Parliamentary buildings were finished at Ottawa, one of the first problems was to regulate the heating apparatus, in short, to make them habitable for half the year; and this precisely is the problem with us in relation to another and equally necessary kind of plenishing and furnishing, for town and country. It remains for us to learn whether we have the internal heat and light...."

**Adams George Archibald, 1868:**

"[Ottawa has] been placed in a proud position. You have become the centre of a population of four millions. The eyes of this people are on you. The tastes you cultivate, the habits you cherish, the extent of intellectual life which breathes and glows among you, will show whether you deserve this glorious elevation."

**Sir John A. Macdonald, 1872:**

"... the civil service of Canada would compare favorably with that of any country in the world[;] here there were, among its members, poets, men of science and men of literary tastes and habits, some of whom had even European fame, and if they had not more of public acknowledgment, it was rather because of a limited sphere of action than of capacity."

**Joseph Howe, 1872:**

"I would have the young men of Ottawa not only dutiful and good, but refined, accomplished, and intellectual—ambitious to make the political Capital of the country the home of the Arts, the literary centre of the Confederacy, the fountain-head of elevated thought and laudable ambition. "

**Sir Wilfred Laurier, 1893**

"...and when the day comes, as it will come by and by, it shall be my pleasure and that of my colleagues, I am sure, to make the city of Ottawa the centre of the intellectual development of this country..."

**Archibald Lampman, 1893**

"Viewed at a distance of two or three miles, from any point of the compass, bossed with its central mass of towers, its lower and less presentable quarters buried behind rock or wood, [Ottawa] is one of the loveliest cities in the world. It is so placed that it can never be anything but beautiful, and as the years go on, bringing with them the spread of a finer architecture and a richer culture of the surrounding country, its beauty will be vastly greater than it is even now. It will become an ideal city for the artist."