

Edifice that Edifies:

**Understanding the Expressive Communication Attributes of the
Architecture of Legislature Buildings**

- A Case Study of Alberta Legislature Building

By

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DISCLAIMERS

This study is an academic undertaking in pursuit of knowledge. Although the study relied on knowledgeable interviewees for data, the results contained herein are specific to the context of the study. Readers are advised to exercise prudence regarding the use and application of this study to real life setting.

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ABSTRACT

Architecture and communication are part of our everyday life. As a functional art expressed in a physical form through buildings, architecture embodies expression, content, functionalism and symbolism that affects and influences every aspect of our lives in manners that, arguably, we often do not carefully observe. Undoubtedly, this statement is exemplified in legislature buildings across the world. Many scholars have a shared understanding that legislature buildings are designed to make expressive statements on diverse issues including political, historical, architectural, cultural and communal matters - and can therefore be considered as media for transmitting and receiving complex sets of messages. Using the Alberta Legislature Building as a case study to explore and understand the expressive communication attributes of architecture, this research study attempts to address questions about what possible messages are transmitted and received through the architecture of Legislature Buildings - within the context of how history and political culture are used as lenses for interpreting the meaning of the possible messages.

Drawing on Marshall McLuhan's proposition that "the medium is the message" and media themselves - not the content they carry - should be the focus of study, the researcher examined how the Alberta Legislature Building means and functions as a medium to convey ideas, images and thoughts about political culture of preservation, articulation and formation to its audience through the application of Goodsell's postulations regarding functions performed by parliamentary buildings and Goodman's mechanism for identifying how buildings mean. Through passive observation, case study application, content analysis of possible messages and interviews

conducted by the researcher, the study confirms the assumption that buildings can function as communication media albeit that they do not denote. The study reveals the significant expressive communicative realities that are intrinsic in the character-defining elements of Alberta's most significant historic edifice.

Based on the possible messages, interpretations and meanings gleaned from the architecture of the Alberta Legislature Building, the findings of this study suggests that a legislature or parliamentary building is not only a medium through which messages and meanings are conveyed, it is a repository and an embodiment of the dynamism of the political process and culture of in any society. It is a building that provides an uplifting enlightenment about the history, politics, culture and identity of a people; thus, it is indeed an edifice that educates and truly edifies with messages that are independent of language or linguistic mechanisms. The interpretation of messages conveyed through the Alberta Legislature Building silently draws attention to the fact that meaning does not solely exist in language, media, or messages but in the people who create and consume the messages.

INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary Architecture and Political Culture

There is one in every provincial capital in Canada and scores of them in almost every seat of government of most democratic jurisdictions around the world. They are usually associated with politics, power and governance and judging by their characteristics, they are meant to attract and garner interest and attention. Legislature or parliamentary¹ buildings belong to a unique architectural typology of public architecture that is inherently political by virtue of the activities that occur within their interior spaces. As a product created and influenced by social and cultural conditions, architecture – and indeed legislature building especially - is often established not by architects but by the society based on social formations and fundamental purposes and requirements of government. Beyond serving as just symbols of the state, legislature buildings can be understood not only in terms of political and cultural contexts that brought them into being, but also in the meanings and messages they ultimately¹ communicate.

Legislature buildings are among the most prominent symbols of government in any polity (Goodsell, 1988). They represent tradition, stability and authority. As well, they embody an image or commanding presence of the state (Cope, 2001). Reminiscent of most public architecture, parliamentary architecture, directly or indirectly, contributes to the shaping of our everyday lives because, as in most jurisdictions, substantial functions of government consisting

¹ Within the context of this study, the words - legislature and parliamentary - both have the same meaning and will be used interchangeably.

of administration, legislation and dispensing of justice are carried out from within the domain of legislature buildings. Overwhelmingly, it is the legislative functions and activities of a government that most legislature or parliamentary buildings are commonly known for. Beyond this, legislature buildings do have other purpose and use. They are artefacts of political culture (Goodsell, 1988), designed to give expression to the perspectives—especially political perspectives—of individuals and groups (Laswell, 1979) and at the same time, evoke ideals of identity, pride and what Indyk (1988) cited in Cope (2001) called the discourse of power.

Legislature Buildings and Meanings

Parliamentary architecture should not be viewed from the perspective of an instrument of political power only, but should also be observed from the context of environmental discourse and wider communicative realities of architecture. It is stating the obvious that the architecture of legislature buildings possesses meanings that evoke memory, provide reference for space and time, induce cultural significance and history while at the same time serves as a meaningful symbol that are expressive of tacit messages that people interpret to create communicative realities. The assertion by Cope (2001) that the interpretation of parliamentary architecture as statements and representations connotes the communicative capabilities of legislature buildings.

As noted by Whyte (2006), Architecture like all meaningful human endeavours, are capable of being understood. However, this understanding often occurs within social, historical, communal, political and economical contexts. In light of these contexts, buildings, generally considered as the most visible physical expression of architecture, do elicit manifold meanings that by and large cannot be read simply as texts or pictures. Buildings do not usually describe or

depict in the same way as texts or pictures do. Paradoxically, as Goodman (1985) noted, pictorial representation that denotes many things, occurs in salient ways in architectural works. Pictorial representation in many buildings often connote meanings that are made possible or conveyed through prominent parts or components of the building as exemplified by the Byzantine churches with mosaic covered interiors, and the Romanesque-styled building facades consisting almost entirely of sculpture. In some architectural works, representation occurs literally and is conveyed by the whole building as demonstrated in a number of Santiago Calatrava's works such as the gracefully sculptural, postmodern Quadracci Pavillion addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum in Wisconsin - USA completed in 2001 representing culture of the lake: sailboats, weather, sense of motion and change.² The inspiring L'hemispheric building in the City of Arts and Science in Valencia, Spain also designed by Santiago Calatrava and completed in 1998 literally depicts a great open human eye of the world or "the eye of the wisdom." Jørn Utzon's 1973 Opera House in Sydney - Australia is another example of architectural work that depicts or is literally representative of real objects. The Opera House architecture depicts images of sailboats that are commonly found and seen in the Sydney harbour.



Figure 1: *Jørn Utzon's expressionist Opera House in Sydney Australia: Designed to depict the image of sailboats*

² More information on the Quadracci Pavillion of the Milwaukee Art Museum can be obtained from the official website of the museum: <http://www.mam.org/info/details/quadracci.php>.

commonly found and seen in the Sydney harbour

Photo: Richard-seaman.com



Figure 2: *Santiago Calatrava's expressionist L'Hemisfèric Planetarium in Valencia, Spain - also known as 'Eye of the World' - was designed to express the likeness of a great open human eye - "the eye of the wisdom".*

Photo: Valentina Giannicchi

In a similar vein, the communicative abilities of Legislature Buildings are made possible through the visible parts or components of the building. These prominent visible components are often the character-defining elements of the building. Whether or not these elements represent anything, they demonstrate or express certain properties induced and influenced by history, economic and political considerations. The understanding of these distinguishing character-defining elements of legislature buildings as reflected in the composition of the building's architecture over the centuries and decades as well as the familiarity with these elements, has helped transformed legislature buildings all around the world from mere structures into symbolic edifices with rich heritage values. Like many notable heritage buildings, the symbolic significance of legislature buildings is sustained not only by the legislative function of the building but by the authentic, memorable and impactful disposition of the building with time.

In order to understand what messages are conveyed through the architecture of legislature buildings, it is important to consider the ways in which architecture conveys meanings. Although architecture can be considered as a form of art, clearly, not all buildings could be said to be art for the reason that Goodman (1985) noted that a work of art does not depend on the maker's or anyone else's intentions but rather upon how the object in question functions. Thus, a building is a work of art only insofar as it signifies, means, refers and symbolizes in some way (Goodman, 1985). As the most prominent symbol of government in any polity, legislature buildings signifies, means, refers and symbolizes in manifold ways including ways that are sometimes unrelated to being an architectural work. Often, the meanings and messages inherent in legislature buildings are not only embodied in the materials, forms, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations that defines their character-defining elements but may also be linked to the intentions and decisions of politicians, the architects or designers of the buildings prior to or during the design and construction phases.

Using the Alberta Legislature Building as a Case Study

In order to achieve focus in developing a full understanding of the communicative capabilities of parliamentary architecture as well as providing a unique perception in identifying the mechanism of what messages and meanings emanates from government buildings, the Alberta Legislature Building is selected as a unit of analysis for this study.



Figure 3: Night view of the Beaux-Arts styled Alberta Legislature Building in Edmonton Alberta.

Photo: flickr.com – stock photo

The century-old, legislature building located in Edmonton is a fine example of parliamentary architecture that is authentically styled in a classical beaux- arts design language. Considering its association with numerous intimate, historic and significant political, cultural, community and social events, the Alberta Legislature Building evokes memory, sense of place, pride and ownership in Albertans. As well, it continues to be an outstanding symbolic focal point with enormous impact not only on the surrounding communities but the province at large.

Objectives and Importance of Study

Many scholars including Laswell (1979), Milne (1981), Goodman (1985), Indyk (1988), Godsell (1988), Cope (2001), Barnstone (2005), Whyte (2006), Vale (2008) have a shared understanding that legislature buildings are designed to make expressive statements on manifold issues – often political - and therefore are media for transmitting and receiving complex sets of messages which can sometimes be arbitrary, abstract, literal or plainly explicit. Some of these messages are formed or charted as a result of choices made by individuals such as the designer or a politician associated with the building, while other messages may be formed as a result of unintended and unacknowledged products of widely shared acculturation (Vale, 2008). However, in an attempt to explore the messages associated with the expression of the architecture of the Alberta Legislature Building, an understanding of the building's heritage value defined by its architectural importance, historical association and contextual value will be necessary.

The architecture of legislature buildings can be characterized as a medium that enables interactions between people, objects and their surroundings. This is mainly so because many regimes are able to make an especially powerful symbolic use of the physical environment to make statements and communicate messages. The possible messages from the architecture of legislature buildings suggest the presence of a medium that is independent of language or linguistic mechanisms. Thus, one of the objectives of this study is to use the Alberta Legislature Building as a case study to explore and understand the expressive communication attributes of the architecture of legislature buildings.

Research Questions

In order to help understand the communication attributes of legislature buildings, this study attempts to address the following research question:

- If the architecture of legislature buildings constitutes a medium of communication, how are the messages conveyed through these buildings interpreted within the context of history, politics, and cultural change?"

The above stated research question will be addressed within the context of how history and political culture are used as lenses for interpreting the meaning of messages conveyed through a tangible architectural medium - the Alberta Legislature Building – which is made up of character-defining elements that defines the medium as well as its heritage.

Definitions of Key Variables

What is Communication in the Context of this Study?

In a study of this nature, finding an acceptable definition for communication is often an uphill task. As Chandler (1994) noted, everyday references to communication are based on a 'transmission' model in which a 'sender' 'transmits' a 'message' to a 'receiver' - a formula which reduces meaning to 'content' (delivered like a parcel) and which tends to support the intentional fallacy. With this in mind, various theories of communication shall be referenced in this study in

order to provide a framework to define the relationship between communication and architecture, based on an understanding of the process of information transfer through several methods such as sending and receiving wordless messages (i.e. non-verbal communication by buildings).

Since architecture embodies expression, content, functionalism and symbolism, viewing architectural communication through semiotic lenses is imperative. From a semiotic perspective, communication involves encoding and decoding texts according to the conventions of appropriate codes (Jakobson, 1971). According to Chandler (1994), the centrality of codes to communication is a distinctive semiotic contribution which emphasizes the social nature of communication and the importance of conventions. While most semioticians are concerned with communicative meaning-making, some semioticians also study the attribution of meaning even where no intent to communicate exists or where no human agency was involved in producing what is perceived as a sign. With respect to the Alberta Legislature Building, little is known about the intent for the building to communicate. Over the years, the building has attained a monument status and could be perceived as a sign and symbol of Alberta's political culture.

What is Architecture?

The thrust of this paper is not intended to resolve the age-old debate common among scholars to establish a single acceptable definition for architecture, but rather to provide a context for this study. The term architecture is used in broad terms to include three dimensional built forms such as buildings that fulfil some function connected with life in society. It is therefore the imaginative blend of art and science in the design of environments for people. Architecture

encompasses the art of articulation of space (Zevi, 1957) and it involves a creative process of conceiving and developing physical forms to accommodate human needs and purposes. In recognition of the fact that people need places to eat, work, live, play and interact, Architects transform these needs into concepts and then develop the concepts into building images that can be constructed. As Spreiregen (2005) noted, architecture is an exercise in synthesis, of putting together a complex array of disparate parts to form a unified, interdependent composition. This complex array of disparate parts often include tangible elements such as the *character-defining elements* of the structure as well as intangible elements such as the appreciation of the building's aesthetic expression or style shaped by history, politics and culture.

What are Character-Defining Elements?

Most historic structures, especially symbolic and significant architectural heritage resource such as the Alberta Legislature Building, possess heritage values that reside in the character-defining elements of the building. The character-defining elements physically define the architecture of the building. According to the Canadian *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2003)*, "Character-defining elements refers to the materials, forms, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations or meanings that together comprise the *heritage value* of a historic place (or historic property...), and which must be retained in order to preserve its *heritage value*."

What is Heritage Value?

The heritage value of historic resources³ often takes into account factors such as aesthetic, historic, scientific, educational, cultural, social, or spiritual importance or significance for past, present or future generations. As such, a building's heritage value is embodied in the materials, forms, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations or meanings that together comprise its character-defining elements. The heritage value of a building comprises three major thematic elements. These elements are (1) architectural importance, (2) historical association and (3) contextual value, all of which help to explain some of the core heritage values that are specific to any historic resources.

Architectural Importance may include the relationship of the building to contemporary architectural trends; the importance of its designer; acknowledgement on the part of design professionals that it is of a high standard in relationship to its type or expression; or is publicly acknowledged as a significant and important architectural element of its community.

For instance, is there meaning attached to the building in addition to other inherent values? How does the building impact public space? Does it frame a view, or obscure a view, etc.

Historical Association takes account of whether the heritage resource is identified as the location of a specific historical event; has connections with such an event or events; was constructed as a result of such an event or period; or has connections with significant individuals of historical importance or relevance.

³The term "historic resource" and "historic place" have been used interchangeably in this study to refer to a structure, building, and group of buildings, district, landscape, archaeological site or other place that has been formally recognized for its heritage value within a geographical or statutory jurisdiction.

Contextual Value explores how the resource is associated with the development of the host community; for example, did the heritage resource trigger the development or other forms of change in the community; did the site development have a significant impact on the community, and in what way; is the development associated with a grouping of buildings of importance to the local or larger community; and what impact did the development have on the perception of the community in relation to its immediate and/or larger community context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Exploring the Semiotics, Architecture, Medium and Communication

Architecture and communication as separate fields of human endeavours have been extensively researched. However, studies on the subject of parliamentary architecture as an effective medium of communication are scant. A literature review suggests both the significance of political culture in parliamentary architecture and the role that parliamentary architecture play in making statements and representations of meaning (Godsell, 1988; Cope, 2001; Barnstone, 2005). Given the significance of the symbolism of legislature buildings all around the world and representations of meaning co-created and associated to them by people, the concept of parliamentary architecture will be examined using theories in communications and if messages from legislature buildings bear any relationship to Goodsell's (1988) political culture of preservation, articulation and formation.

From a semiotic viewpoint, Eco (1976) linked architecture with various communication phenomena but was short of clearly theorizing architecture as an effective medium of communication. He noted that architecture is often experienced as communication even when recognizing its functionality (Eco as cited in Leach, 1996). Implicitly, Eco contends that buildings communicate the functions they fulfil by signifying the existence of the building's possible functions even when the building is not being used. This semiotic framework recognizes the presence of a "sign vehicle whose denoted meaning is the function it makes possible" (Eco, 1976).

As observed by Jackson (2006), communication take place around, against, near, or inside the built form and is often perceived and experienced in different ways. This perception and experience generates a meaning that not only emanates from the function destined to be fulfilled by the building but also from varieties of architectural codes that include technical, syntactic and semantic codes (Eco, 1976) or signs similar to language, writing, images and other forms of codes which rest on conventions. Elaborating on codes, Walker (1987) noted that “Architecture can be characterized by tracing the hierarchy of codes that operate within it: verbal codes, graphic codes and codes of the built” (p. 173). These codes embodies architectural expressions that in turn communicate quality and meaning that are interpreted and transformed into art in a manner similar to which words are transformed into literature, and sounds are metamorphosized into music.

Although parliamentary buildings are communicative objects that can be perceived, through the senses—visual, auditory, touch, smell, and kinaesthetic (Jackson, 2006), there is more to architectural communication than this. Architectural objects connote certain ideologies of function as well as convey meanings. According to Whyte (2006), the assumption that buildings are a means of conveying meaning is not new. Whyte cited Germain Boffrand’s contention in 1745 that “An edifice, by its composition, expresses as on a stage that the scene is pastoral or tragic, that it is a temple or a palace, a public building destined for a specific use, or a private house. These different edifices, through their disposition, their structure, and the manner in which they are decorated, should announce their purpose to the spectator.” Furthermore, Whyte (2006) corroborated architects such as Vitruvius, Venturi and other architectural scholars

who maintained that buildings are not just utilitarian but are instruments (media) by which emotions, ideas, and beliefs are articulated.

In a similar vein that Umberto Eco, through seminal approach, linked architecture to the phenomena of mass media, Berman (1999) perceive architecture, especially public buildings as communicative objects for public relations where visual and physical rhetoric is expressed. Berman cited the signature form used by Frank Lloyd Wright at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, as an example of how language of architectural design attempts to persuade and communicate ideas of alternative approaches to spectators. In this example, Frank Lloyd Wright is the message transmitter, the romanticized Guggenheim Museum building is the medium of communication while the spectator is the message receiver. The Museum's form, massing, circulation, use of light, texture, and materials articulates the message and experiences being contemplated.

Following Eco's theory of semiotics and architecture, and applying semantic meaning to relation of signs to their significates, the Guggenheim Museum building significative form is composed of codes worked out on the strength of inferences from usage and proposed structural models of given communicative relations. The meanings of the message transmitted through the building as a medium can both be denotative and connotative. The meanings are attached to the architectural signs called the sign vehicles on the basis of codes in order to make communication viable thus making the building's communicative possibilities more obvious. This is the semiotic universe in which Eco, cited in Leach (1997), noted reading of architecture as communication becomes viable.

Between the medium - building and the message recipients - spectator, translations and interpretations are imperative. Whyte (2006) suggests that architectural interpretation is analogous to a series of transpositions based on three assumptions. The first is that architecture is capable of being understood; secondly, architectural interpretation involve a wide variety of media and genres and thirdly, building structures evolve from conception to construction and then to interpretation. Whyte (2006) noted that both the intention of the creator – the architect – and the meaning comprehended by the interpreter – the spectator – may change. The semantic meaning of meaning espoused by scholars like Ogden & Richards (1923) and cited in Osgood, et.al., (1957) provides great clarity to the process of interpretation and semiotics.

Given that semiotics is concerned with the study of signs (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008), it is imperative to note that signs are not meaningful in isolation. They are only meaningful when they are interpreted in relation to each other. Semantically, the process of interpretation is bound up with the reception of any signal. Although the communicative possibilities of architecture as noted in the Guggenheim museum can be best explained through semiotics due to the orderliness of architecture, there are other theoretical frameworks such as rhetoric that can be applied to infer the communicative possibilities of architecture and buildings. Scruton's Aesthetics of Architecture cited in Munro (1987) noted that architectural forms, like language, are deliberate or non-natural. However, questions regarding the possibility of being able to dissect architecture into elements resembling words make semiotics a more appropriate theory for analysing architecture.

The idea of architecture of parliamentary buildings as a statement suggests a correlation between language with which the statement is made and the inherent communication that is being established with the statement as well as the medium of transmission. According to Basa (2009), a 'system of statements' which prescribe and describes the theoretical formation of an object through verbal or non-verbal representations gives rise to a discourse. The focus of this paper is to frame the discourse on architecture of legislature buildings within the social construct of communication. Presumably, finding a universally acceptable definition for communication can be daunting. Foulger (2005) defines communication as "the process by which people (Homo Sapiens or other intelligent communicators) construct representations of meaning such that other people can interpret those representations."

Within the context of Foulger's (2005) definition noted above, communication includes verbal or non-verbal interaction between people as well as people and things. It involves the transmission and reception of a message conveyed through a medium or tool capable of transmitting meaning to other intelligent entities such that they can be interpreted. Communication is not a thing but a means of enabling the creation and consumption of representations of meaning. Considering that the architecture of legislature buildings are expressive of messages that people interpret and as Foulger (2005) noted, communication is always mediated, at the very least, by representations of meaning derived from the message, the language that a message is encoded in and the medium with which the encoded message is transmitted, stored, and/or processed, one can allude that people use the architecture of legislature buildings as a medium to co-create realities beyond politics, statehood and power to

address issues and influence concepts such as collective identity, dignity, freedom and other representations of meaning people associate with legislature buildings.

From the foregoing, meaning does not exist in language, media, or messages. It exists in the people who create and consume messages. It should be noted that languages respond to different media in different ways, therefore, this study is intended to espouse the characteristics that are inherent in the architecture of parliamentary buildings while being cognisant of the variety of architectural languages used to express the architecture of parliamentary buildings. Legislature buildings around the world including the Reichstag in Berlin, Australia's Parliament House in Canberra, House of Commons & House of Lords in Westminster - England, the Parliament in Ottawa, the Alberta Legislature building in Edmonton and a host of others make expressive statements albeit in different architectural languages that are subject to manifold interpretations.

Contextual Background and Overview of the Alberta Legislature Building

Nestled majestically on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River and adorned by significant buildings and artifacts that reflect Alberta's history, heritage, politics, people, and culture, the Alberta Legislature Building and associated grounds is arguably the most significant heritage site in Alberta. The Legislature Grounds is a site that embodies high heritage values with significant buildings that not only include the domed, granite and sandstone Legislature Building but also the elegant Bowker Building and the magnificent art-deco Federal Building. While the focus of this study is on the Legislature building, all the other buildings on the precinct epitomize Alberta's rich history in a way that only a handful of sites today can similarly boast.

Quick Facts:

- Building GPS Coordinates: 53°32'0"N 113°30'24"W
- Architect: A. M. Jeffers
- Address: 10800 – 97 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta - Canada
- Usable Building Area: Approximately 10,000 square meters
- Year of Completion: 1912; Year of Opening: 1913

The Alberta Legislature Building is a five-storey Beaux-Arts styled building that was completed in 1912. By far the oldest and most prominent landmark on the Legislature Grounds, the Legislature Building is a historic structure of exceptional architectural importance. As an edifice with great heritage values, the Legislature Building significantly contributes to the quality and civic nature of the entire Legislature Grounds and is publicly acknowledged as an important architectural element not only in Alberta's Capital City but within the province and beyond.

As a century-old building, and notwithstanding the relatively few components or areas of the building that could be described as being in "marginal condition" (mostly attributed to the building's age), the Legislature Building is generally in good condition with durable materials and excellent workmanship that characterizes the era in which it was built. As well, the building is associated with significant political, cultural, social and community events and continues to be an outstanding symbolic focal point of the Alberta Legislature Centre and an asset that evokes sense of place, pride, ownership and community in all Albertans.

History of the Alberta Legislature Building

The first sitting of the Legislative Assembly of the new Government of Alberta was held at the defunct Thistle Rink located on 102nd Avenue and 102nd Street in Edmonton⁴ shortly after the province of Alberta was created. The sitting of the assembly later moved to McKay Avenue School⁵ located on 99th Avenue and 104th Street. The school served as a reasonable first home for the legislative assembly; however, around spring of 1906, Alberta's Minister of Public Works, W.H. Cushing, was adamant that a more permanent home was needed as soon as possible. Soon after, in October 1906, Alberta's first Premier, Alexander Cameron Rutherford negotiated with the Hudson's Bay Company to purchase approximately 21 acres (8.5 hectares) of lands surrounding the now largely abandoned site of Fort Edmonton (V) for \$4,000 an acre.

Subsequently, with most observers agreeing that the site was best suited to serve as the location for a new Legislature Building, the remains of Fort Edmonton (V) and a residential building on the site owned by Chief Trader Richard Hardisty were removed to make way for a new legislature building. With its prominent and picturesque location overlooking the North Saskatchewan River, the site was viewed by many at that time as highly appropriate because of its historical associations with Fort Edmonton, which was then seen as Edmonton's cradle of development.

⁴ Information obtained from the Edmonton Public Library; Retrieved November 13, 2009, from <http://www.epl.ca> - The Thistle Rink was built in 1903 but was destroyed in a fire in October 1913.

⁵ Information obtained from the Heritage Community Foundation's Alberta Online Encyclopedia; Retrieved November 13, 2009, from http://www.abheritage.ca/abpolitics/process/mckay_intro.html

McKay Avenue School is Edmonton's oldest surviving brick schoolhouse. The school served as Alberta's first Legislature. On March 19, 1906, the newly elected Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) gathered in the third-floor assembly hall of McKay Avenue School, which had been rented from the Edmonton Protestant Public School Board for \$400 per session. Here, in 1906 and 1907, the elected representatives charted the orderly development of the new province.

Planning and Construction of the Legislature Building

Planning of the Alberta Legislature Building began in 1906 – the year after the Province of Alberta was created. Initial architectural plans were drawn up in 1907 and work did not commence on the site until 1908. The cornerstone of the building was laid in 1909 and by 1910, the building's exterior was substantially complete with interior work continuing through 1911. The first session of the legislature held in the new building was on November 30, 1911, which may be taken as the effective opening date for the building. Work, however, continued on both the interior and exterior of the building well into 1912, and the official opening of the Alberta Legislature Building by the Governor-General of Canada, H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, took place on September 3, 1912.

The design and construction of the Alberta Legislature Building involved many of Alberta's most significant early architects, engineers, contractors and Public Works officials. Following the appointment of a prominent Calgary architect, E.C. Hopkins, as Provincial Architect in March 1906, work began on the design of the new building. Hopkins led the design until early 1907 when he left the project. As noted in the Heritage Community Foundation's Alberta Online Encyclopedia, Edward Hopkins' first design for the Legislature building which was rejected in 1906, was based too closely on plans for the British Columbia Legislature. With Hopkins' departure, it should be noted that Allan Merrick Jeffers became the Provincial Architect in 1907 and continued the design of the new Legislature Building.

Like the Hopkins plans, the design by Jeffers for the Legislature building was not spared from controversies - one of which was the issue of similarity of the Alberta Legislature Building's design to other capitol buildings in other North American jurisdictions such as Minnesota, Wisconsin and Rhode Island. The Rhode Island influence on Jeffers' design may be explained by the fact that Jeffers was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island in 1875⁶ and also studied in the Rhode Island School of Design.⁷

Although started by Hopkins, the design of the Alberta Legislature Building is credited mainly to Jeffers who remained as Provincial Architect from 1907 to 1912. This is largely due to the fact that at the age of 32, with limited architectural training and experience, Jeffers did not only inherit the Legislature Building project when E.C. Hopkins resigned but also reversed the design direction previously taken by Hopkins. Jeffers proposed a very traditional "Beaux Arts" design for the Alberta Legislature Building as opposed to Hopkins' design that bore resemblance with the Romanesque-styled British Columbia Legislature. Moreover, unlike Hopkins, the fact that Jeffers' plans proceeded to construction suggests that Jeffers' ultimate design met with the public's desire for a legislature building that reflected the optimism of Edmontonians and Albertans at a time when the city and province were experiencing an extraordinary growth. Indeed, Jeffers' simplified Beaux-Arts styled design may have addressed the apparent desire of a young province to make a bold statement with its new Legislature Building.

⁶ Alberta Historic Sites Service, Allan Merrick Jeffers Research File, letter from Rhode Island State Archives, Kenneth Carlson, Reference Archivist, 22 February 1995. This file of archival and secondary material was generated as part of the back ground research undertaken for the Legislative Assembly Interpretive Centre.

⁷ As cited by Don Wetherell and Michael Payne (2009), Jeffers' application for certification as a practicing architect in British Columbia is the source for many of these career details. It is used by Bodnar in her study as a source for much of her biographical sketch of Jeffers. See Bodnar, *Prairie Legislature Buildings*, 42

Core Heritage Value and Thematic Elements of the Alberta Legislature Building

The heritage value of the Alberta Legislature Building is embodied in the materials, forms, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations or meanings that together comprise its character-defining elements. As discussed in the introduction section of this study, there are three major thematic elements that the study takes into account in assessing the heritage value of the Alberta Legislature Building. These thematic elements consisting of architectural importance, historical association and contextual value, are examined in the following sections with specific references to the Alberta Legislature Building.

Architectural Importance of the Alberta Legislature Building - The Alberta Legislature Building was constructed to accommodate and facilitate the legislative functions of the province while at the same time serving as the de-facto legislative symbol of Alberta. Although the expression of this symbolic monument in Edmonton is similar to a number of comparable Beaux-Arts design styled buildings found in other North American jurisdictions, the Alberta Legislature Building still portray unique elements that sets it well apart from others .

Being a Beaux-Arts styled edifice, the building incorporates several design features including a central dome, symmetrical plan and elevation, as well as classical detailing. The building style is a reflection of the architectural trends of the era in which it was constructed and due to skilful proportioning and massing by architects Allan Merrick Jeffers and Richard Blakey, this relatively modest capital building has a visual presence that is perceptibly much greater than its actual size. As such, the building contributes immensely in enhancing the quality of the

Legislature Precinct it resides on and is publicly acknowledged as a significant edifice within and outside the province of Alberta.

The Alberta Legislature building represents a high standard of craftsmanship and style of architecture that was not only in accord with the trends of the era in which it was constructed but also remains relevant in the subsequent contemporary era. Over the years, the Legislature Building has become an asset that evokes a sense of place, pride, ownership and community in the citizens of Alberta and beyond. The building has also become a symbol of peace, order and good governance in the province.

Historical Association of the Alberta Legislature Building - The creation of the province of Alberta in 1905 necessitated the design and construction of the Alberta Legislature Building. Since 1913, all provincial legislation in Alberta together with many other significant social, political, cultural and community events are associated with this structure. The building was constructed near the site of the original Fort Edmonton which was also a native encampment of several hundreds of years prior to the establishment of the Fort. It is therefore at the symbolic heart of the Edmonton community.

Contextual Value of the Alberta Legislature Building - Undoubtedly, the site on which the Alberta Legislature building is built is associated with the development of both Edmonton and the province of Alberta. As the seat of government, the Legislature Building has had a profound impact on the development of both the local community and the province at large. It can be argued that the use of the building helped trigger a multitude of developments within and around the province.

The Legislature Building is also considered the centre piece and “primus inter pares” of provincial government buildings - not only within the site where the building is located but the province at large. The building has had an impact on the perception of the community in which it resides. Without this building the Centre would not exist and in terms of the variety of architectural styles found at the Centre, the Legislature Building is the only example of a simple but elegant neo-classical Beaux-Arts style on the site.

Overview of Design of the Alberta Legislature Building

The heritage value of the Legislature Building and associated grounds resides in its neoclassical design characteristics, its historical associations and its site relationships. As Alberta’s temple of democracy since 1912, the building has become a significant symbol of the province and is of enormous importance to the citizens and residents of the province. It has traditionally been used for legislative and administrative functions, as well as providing a venue for celebrations, social events and entertainments.

The composition and layout of the Alberta Legislature Building demonstrate the presence of Beaux-Arts planning and design principles in the building’s design. This is evident in its symmetrical T-shaped floor plan, arched door and window openings, the frontal flight of steps and its strong central building section with the recognizable dome rising above the building’s pediment adjacent to a spacious rotunda. The front entrance, which is located on the north façade

of the building, features a wide flight of steps, a central projecting portico with six hand-carved Corinthian columns, and an entablature and pediment.

High quality and durable materials, including granite and sandstone, were used to finish the exterior of the building. Granite was also utilized up to the soffit of the first storey while sandstone was used for the remaining four storeys. The configuration of the building's design is such that the main entrance leads directly into the rotunda, which connects the east and west wings of the main floor to the great marble staircase that leads to the Assembly Chamber.

As noted in the Government of Alberta Heritage Resource management Information System research files⁸, the type and style of the Alberta Legislature Building is unique in Alberta (and only one of three in Canada) with no expense spared in obtaining materials of high quality and aesthetic beauty. Materials used for the construction of the building were sourced from various parts of the world. The basement is finished with granite sourced from Vancouver Island while the upper storeys are finished with sandstone supplied from the Glenbow quarry in Calgary. The marble inside the rotunda came from Italy, Pennsylvania, and Quebec while the artisans that laid the terrazzo floor in the building were brought from Italy.

The interior of the building features three kinds of marbles. These are green marble - used on the columns and the rotunda walls; light gray marble used as finishing for the floors and staircase; and thirdly, dark gray marble used for the base of the walls and columns. The marbles were used in concert with wooden materials such as mahogany and oak. Other attractive features

⁸Information obtained from <https://hermis.alberta.ca/ARHP/Details.aspx?DeptID=2&ObjectID=HS+6269>

of the interior construction include hand-carved oak doors, stained glass windows, and brass fittings.

The Legislature Chamber is lit by stained glass skylights supplemented by multitudes of light bulbs. Inside the rotunda are two bronze statues, one of Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, after whom the province is named, and one of Chief Crowfoot, a Blackfoot Indian leader whose policy of cooperation led to the peaceful settlement of Alberta. Portraits of Premiers and Lieutenants Governor adorn the walls of the third floor, while the portraits of Alberta's Speakers can be viewed one floor above.

Decorative hardwood carvings within the building include the province's coats of arms found in a number of locations: - above the main entrance to the Chamber, above the Speaker's Chair, and in the Carillon Room on the fifth floor. According to the Alberta Legislative Assembly Office, the carillon,⁹ located on the fifth floor, was installed in 1967 to commemorate Canada's Centennial. The Legislature carillon has 391 finely tuned bells and has capacity to create electronically amplified music that is especially invigorating on a crisp winter's day.

⁹ A carillon works much like a piano: when its keyboard is played, metal hammers strike finely tuned bells.

Identifying the Visual Character-Defining Elements of the Legislature Building

In a similar manner in which messages are conveyed through a communication device, this study revolves around exploring the messages conveyed through an architectural medium - the Alberta Legislature Building. As a tangible and physical medium, the Legislature Building is composed of components. These components constitute the character-defining elements of the building where its heritage resides. The major character-defining elements of the Alberta Legislature Building, listed below, were reviewed and observed on site. The images and definitions of these elements are appended to this study as Appendix A.

List of Character – Defining Elements of the Alberta Legislature Building - categorized based on a three-step approach outlined by Nelson (1988) and discussed in the Method section of this study.

- Category 1: *Elements Gleaned from Building’s “Overall” Visual Character:*
 - Shape: symmetrical T-shaped plan and façade (moderately decorated)
 - Style: Beaux Art
 - Roof and Roof Features:
 - Large Central Dome
 - Cupola or Lantern
 - Plain Parapet
 - Stone Dormer
 - Roof Trim:
 - Corbel (or console)

- Vergeboards
- Special Features: Balustrade
- Plain Eaves -
- Roof Trim - Special Features:
 - Monumental Pediment
 - Finial
- Openings:
 - Large arched entranceway
 - Decorative window arches / lintels
 - Voussoirs and Keystone
- Projections:
 - Main Entrance Porch
 - The Main Portico
 - Entablature
 - Pilaster
 - Columns
- Trim and Secondary Features
 - Arcade
 - String or Belt Course
 - Plinth

- Category 2: *Elements Gleaned from Building's "Arm's Length" Visual Character:*
 - Materials:
 - Granite
 - Sandstone
 - Wood (Wooden doors)
 - Brass Hardware and Fittings
 - Craft Details:
 - Decorative hardwood carvings

- Category 3: *Elements Gleaned from Building's "Interior" Visual Character:*
 - Individually Important Spaces and Sequence of Related Spaces
 - The Rotunda
 - The Grand Stairway
 - The Legislature Chamber
 - The Carillion Room
 - Miscellaneous Art Features
 - Sculptures
 - Paintings

METHOD

Research Design: Addressing the Research Question through Case Study Approach

There are multitudes of parliamentary buildings around the world. They exist in almost every seat of government of most democratic jurisdictions around the world. To comprehensively understand messages conveyed through parliamentary buildings, knowledge of the building's architecture, history, local political culture and environment are essential. With this in mind, studying all parliamentary buildings around the world by one person is virtually impossible. As Becker (cited in Silverman, 2005) argues, "we can't study every case of whatever we are interested in, nor should we want to." As such, in order to develop a full understanding of the communicative capabilities within the framework of the research questions developed, the Alberta Legislature building is selected as the unit of analysis. The century old Alberta Legislature Building in Edmonton is a fine example of parliamentary architecture that is appropriate and representative because it is constructed in a Beaux-Arts classical style which was not only typical of the era in which it was built but similar to many legislature buildings in other North American jurisdiction.

Major Factors Informing the Selection of the Alberta Legislature Building as a Case Study

Opened in 1912, the Alberta Legislature Building located in Edmonton, Alberta, is a fine example of the architecture of parliamentary building. Built on a significant heritage site where the former Fort Edmonton V, a Hudson's Bay Company fur trading post, was first located, the

Alberta Legislature Building is an important public building not only within the province but beyond. The selection of the Alberta Legislature Building as a case study was informed by the enduring significance, historical associations and the intrinsic heritage, political and communal value of the building. Appropriateness in addressing the research question, author's interest and ease of access to information, are other factors that aided decision to select the Alberta Legislature Building as a case study. As noted by Silverman (2005), the results, explanations and findings arising from a qualitative research (utilizing case study method) could be generalizable in some way. It is hoped that the outcome and findings emanating from the case study used in this work will have a wider resonance and application in the field of parliamentary architecture and communication.

Methods of Data Collection

A qualitative research method comprising documentary-based research (text and aural documents) was adopted for the study. The text included visual resources obtained from the study site while the aural document was generated mainly through interviews with wide range of participants that were carefully and purposefully selected. As noted by Creswell (2009), the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question.

Text and Visual Materials: Visual data encompasses anything from videos to photographs to naturally occurring observational data (Silverman, 2005). The visual materials generated for this study mainly comprise photographs and observational data. These site-

generated visual data were supplemented with other types of data that were generated primarily through archival document research. The documents researched include historical and current photographs as well as site specific statement of heritage documents (obtained from sources within the authorities having jurisdiction on the study site). The documents were intended to unveil information on legislature buildings with particular focus of Alberta Legislature Building, cultural values of the polity of the province, contemporaneous political attitudes and other necessary information germane to the research.

Process of identifying the overall visual character of Alberta Legislature Building

The approach and methodology adopted for this study acknowledges the significant heritage value, the pristine nature and beauty embodied in the Legislature Building and its surroundings. Since the thrust of this study revolves around the understanding of the communication attributes inherent in the architecture of legislature buildings, and by extension, their character-defining elements, it is imperative that the overall visual character of the case study building - the Alberta Legislature Building - and the process of character identification be defined from the outset.

For the purpose of this study, a three-step approach outlined by Nelson (1988) was used by the researcher to identify materials, features and spaces that contributed to the visual character of the Alberta Legislature Building. The three-step approach involved first examining the Legislature Building from afar (i.e. from Capital Boulevard – 108 Street to the north, from Walterdale Bridge to the southeast, from the High Level Bridge to the southwest and 97th Avenue to the east) in order to understand its overall setting and architectural context; then

moving in very close to appreciate the building's materials and its craftsmanship and surface finishes evident in these materials; and thirdly, going into and through the building to examine and explore the interior spaces and details that comprise its interior visual character.

On-Site Review and Study Feedback Process

The study deals with the understanding of the messages emanating from a tangible and physical medium. The medium in question here is the Alberta Legislature Building and is composed of various components. These components are the character-defining elements of the building. As such, an on-site review of the Alberta legislature Building that was carried out by the researcher between November 2009 and January 2010 was intended to physically identify the visual aspects as well as to determine the character-defining elements of the building. The on-site review resulted in useful observational data regarding the building's character, precinct, as well as the conditions, constraints and noticeable communicative attributes of the Legislature Building.

In addition to personal observations (site reviews and walkthroughs), extensive research and interviews were conducted in November 2009 by the researcher. The interviews, conducted both on a one-on-one and group basis, included tourists, employees of Alberta Infrastructure and the Legislative Assembly Office, neighbouring residents, etc..., formed the core of the feedback process for the study. Through this research process, a growing understanding of the many and varied needs of the Alberta Legislature Building and associated grounds evolved. The most critical aspect of the approach adopted in this study was the interactive data-gathering and interview sessions, in which employees of public and government departments such as the

Legislative Assembly Office and Alberta Infrastructure, as well as members of the public assisted in providing feedback. The employees and members of the public also identified ways in which the Legislature Building and its character-defining elements convey messages that are interpreted within the context of history, politics, and cultural change. Each interview session yielded varying pieces of information, with one finding validating another identified from a seemingly unrelated session.

Interviews

Interviews were the main source of aural data collection for this study. The interviews were designed with sets of semi-structured questions including probe, comparative directive and non-directive questions selected to purposefully uncover specific information with an aim to fill in the gaps that could not be gleaned from text documents. With the use of photo elicitation, interviewees were prompted to provide narratives and identify political / cultural expressions or messages that were obvious to them from the building.

Recruitment and Interview Process:

The researcher prepared leaflets containing information about the research study. These leaflets were distributed to interested participants within the categories of interviewees identified below and once an interviewee was confirmed, contact was made directly through the appropriate channels in order to communicate the researcher's objectives, processes and purpose of interview. Additionally, informed consent forms and Letter of Consent were reviewed and obtained from prospective interviewees. It should be noted that the selection of interviewees was

done on the basis of good research and reliable information, following which three distinct categories of interviewees were identified. The three categories, discussed in detail below, are

- (1) the insiders / gatekeepers
- (2) the users and
- (3) The expert group.

In total, seven interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks.

The *Insiders / Gatekeepers* category was comprised of those interviewees belonging to the owner group and custodians of the Legislature Building who possess profound knowledge of the building and its inherent political culture. Potential interviewees include the Clerk and / or the Sergeant-at-Arms of the Legislative Assembly, Alberta Infrastructure Department of Architecture / Technical Division, etc...

The Users comprised both active and leisure users of the Legislature Building. This group of interviewees were perhaps not as knowledgeable about issues and concepts in parliamentary architecture and certainly were not as intimately familiar with the case study other than their periodic visits to the building for leisure or recreational purposes. The active user group interviewees included employees currently occupying the building. Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA's) belong to the active user group while tourists, casual visitors and the general public are categorized as the leisure users.

The Expert group consisted of those interviewees possessing knowledge about issues regarding and associated with parliamentary buildings / architecture. These potential interviewees included architects and heritage specialists.

Conducting the Interviews - Before commencing the interview sessions for this study, the researcher obtained and reviewed Informed Consent Form and Letter of Consent from all respondents; after which the researcher explained the purpose of the interview to respondents. The interview process included photo elicitation in which architectural elements, (particularly, character-defining ones) were identified from images of the Alberta Legislature Building. The corresponding significance of the character-defining elements with regard to conveying messages was recognized and discussed within the context of history and political culture. Respondents offered their interpretations and meanings of the possible messages that they believed were being transmitted through the character-defining elements, and by extension, the architecture of Legislature Buildings. As part of the interview, the researcher asked semi-structured questions to clarify the respondents' understanding about possible messages conveyed through parliamentary buildings and their interpretations within the contexts of history, politics and cultural changes.

Sets of Codes and Mechanism for Identifying How Legislature Buildings Mean

The set of codes shown in table 1.0 below were used to analyze the data collected for this study. The codes were based on Goodman's (1985) mechanism for identifying how buildings mean and Goodsell's (1988) postulations regarding functions performed by parliamentary

buildings. As Goodsell (1988) suggested, parliamentary buildings are prime government symbol that perform the functions of preservation, articulation and formation. They preserve cultural values of the polity over time; articulate contemporaneous political attitude and values; and contribute to the formation of political culture. Based on this set of assumptions, this study examines how the Alberta Legislature Building convey ideas, images and thoughts about political culture of preservation, articulation and formation to its audience through the application of Goodsell's (1988) postulations regarding functions performed by parliamentary buildings combined with Goodman's (1985) mechanism for identifying how buildings mean. According to Goodman (1985), there are four ways in which works of architecture may convey meanings. These are: Denotation, Exemplification, Metaphorical Expression and Mediated Reference.

Table 1.0: Sets of Codes and Mechanism for Identifying How Legislature Buildings Mean

Codes	Categories	Definitions
DNT	Denotation	To describe, recount, depict or portray. Includes naming, predication, narration, description, exposition, and also portrayal and all pictorial representation – indeed any labelling, any application of a symbol of any kind to an object, event or other instance of it (Goodman, 1985)
EXM	Exemplification	A variety of symbolization which express certain properties (of the building structure) from a literal standpoint or reference.

EXP	Expression	Exemplification of metaphorically possessed properties of the building structure. i.e. A variety of symbolization which expresses properties mainly from a metaphorical standpoint.
MER	Mediated Reference	Allusion or indirect reference to buildings and in turn to properties that the buildings exemplify.
PRS	Preservation	Preserving the content of political culture with a physical structure (building) in a most elemental sense such as when the building is sited on grounds of a special cultural significance. i.e. holding the grounds indefinitely on behalf of the political order
ART	Articulation	Form of non-verbal language that expresses features of the political culture in a polity as well as values and attitudes.
FOR	Formation	Behavioural consequence having formative effect on the physical environment (such as room sizes, acoustic conditions, etc..) that continue on into the future as part of the political life

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS: *Possible Messages and Interpretations*¹⁰ Identified

During the interview stage of this study, a number of inferences were put forward by various interviewees. These inferences or postulations were analysed by the researcher, using Goodsell's (1988) ideas regarding functions performed by parliamentary buildings and Goodman's (1985) mechanism for identifying how buildings mean. The findings from the interviews are presented in the following sections as a written description of the participants' postulations which illustrate the possible messages gleaned and conveyed through the architecture of the Alberta Legislature Building.

Unpacking the Recognizable Elements of the Legislature Building

The Alberta Legislature Building is characterized by features such as a large central dome, a symmetrical plan, and door and window openings decorated with arches and many others as described in the Literature Review section of this study. With these features, the building's architectural expression is regarded as Beaux-Arts style which can be traced to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Considering the fact that edifices with Beaux-Arts design flavour were quite fashionable in North America from the late 1800s to 1920s, the choice of Beaux Art as the architectural style for the Jeffers-designed Alberta Legislature Building did not come as a surprise. The conception of the building's aesthetics may or may not have been a deliberate

¹⁰ As noted by Laura Lawless' Introduction to Translations and Interpretation (retrieved on April 1, 2010 from http://french.about.com/cs/translation/a/introduction_2.htm), the term interpretation should not be confused with translation. Whereas translation is written and involves taking a written text (such as a book or an article) and translating it in writing into another language, Interpretation is mainly oral. It entails paying attention or listening to something spoken (a speech or phone conversation) and interpreting it orally into the target language. Thus, the main difference between translation and interpretation is in how the information is presented - orally in interpretation and written in translation.

decisive act that is traceable to any one politician or designer other than the fact that it is a product reflecting the character and influence of its era – (an era when the use of Greek, Roman and Egyptian elements in buildings was considered particularly appropriate for public buildings, especially structures designed to house legislative functions) and reminiscent of its symbolic purposes that suggested power, permanence, and tradition.

During the interview stage of this study, images of various visual elements of the Alberta Legislature Building were presented in scrambled order to interviewees. The detailed analysis of the interview data and the visuals of the character-defining elements of the Alberta Legislature Building revealed an inclination that may have been previously unacknowledged - that is – interviewees consistently identified elements such as the dome, cupola, the entablature and the portico, which incidentally are the building's large-sized character-defining elements and pointedly associated them with the Alberta Legislature Building. Whereas, the images of smaller elements such as the corbels, trims, architraves, brass, the imported marble, mahogany, oak, and a number of the building's interior elements were not easily recognizable and associated specifically with the Alberta Legislature Building as strongly as the larger elements of the building.

Communication Models and Buildings

The Alberta Legislature Building was seen by a number of interviewees as a statement meant to convey messages of optimism of a young province; and, as noted by one of the interviewees:

“The architecture of the Alberta Legislature Building was meant to last and it’s talking; it’s speaking about the government and what the government means to the people.”

In view of this fact and in a similar vein, Goodsell (1988) acknowledges that parliamentary buildings are not merely monuments; they are built environments and inhabited spaces designed to give expression in what Cope (2001) interprets as political ‘statements’ which in other words can be deemed to be messages of some sort that are mostly directed to undefined audiences.

The messages conveyed through the Alberta Legislature Building can also be understood in the light of two fundamental elements mentioned instinctively in the well-known Jakobsonian model of communication shown in Figure 4 below. The elements are (1) the communicator and (2) the addressee of the message. The importance of these two elements of communication is underscored by Forceville (1998) when he observed that without a communicator and an addressee there is no communication in the first place.

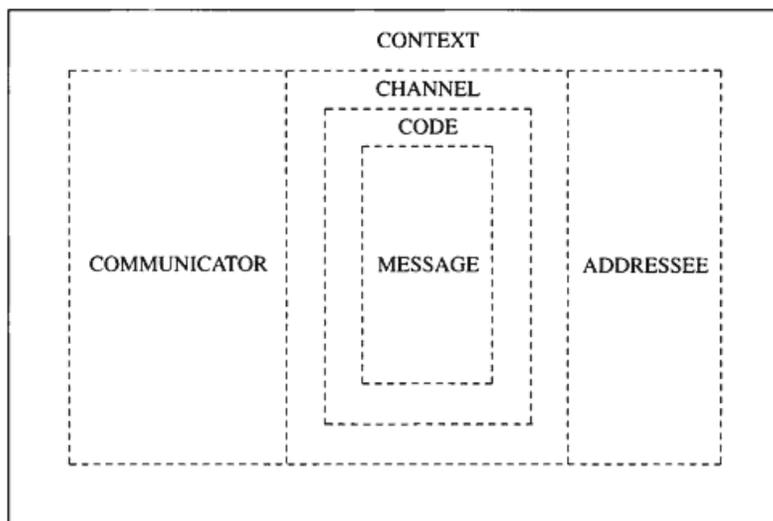


Figure 4: Jakobson's Communication Model.

Source: Forceville (1998)

The Jakobson model of communication moved beyond the basic transmission model of communication that was devised by Shannon and Weaver¹¹ in 1949 and it highlights the importance of the codes and social contexts involved in communication.

According to Forceville (1998), an act of communication always originates somewhere and is directed somewhere. One of the outcomes noted in this study that is corroborated by other studies is the fact that many political establishments make a particularly authoritative symbolic use of the physical environment such as a Legislature Building as a medium to communicate messages to a variety of audiences. In other words, public edifices such as parliamentary buildings serve as a tangible medium used by political regimes to express policies and ideological statements. The politico (through the architect or designer) acts as the originator of the communication or message (the ‘communicator’) while the audience – especially keen spectators and users - assumes the role of the addressees. It is important to note that the possible messages conveyed through the Alberta Legislature Building’s architecture constitute codes within the context of the political culture created by virtue of the function of the building. These messages as noted by Forceville (1998), carry vague, suggestive assumptions that can be understood not only through architectural expressions but also within political, social and cultural contexts.

¹¹The Shannon and Weaver transmission model of communication is a simple linear model composed of five main parts: Information source - where the message is produced; Transmitter - where the message is encoded; Channel - where the signal is carried; Receiver - where the message is decoded; Destination - where the message ends up; and a sixth part which is noise or interference in the channel which causes a signal that was not intended by the source to be received. One of the downside of this model is that it is too simplistic and an incomplete representation of the complex nature of communication. The model does not consider the medium used in the process and ignores the relationship between the communicator and addressee.

McLuhanism: The Alberta Legislature Building as a Medium

Medium is not neutral. Drawing on Marshall McLuhan's proposition that "the medium is the message" and media themselves, not the content they carry, should be the focus of study (McLuhan, 1964), the meaning inherent in the translations deduced from architecture of the Alberta Legislature Building suggests a medium that is independent of language or linguistic mechanism. In recognition of the fact that medium plays an important role in communication, the choice of medium that we make is as crucial as knowing the social conventions that tell us which medium is appropriate for what message. As noted elsewhere in this study, many political establishments make particularly powerful symbolic use of the physical environment such as a legislature building as a medium to communicate messages to a variety of audiences. This suggests that political buildings are an appropriate medium used by political regimes to express values important to that regime. For example, it would not be considered acceptable to house the legislative functions of a powerful sovereign government in a cardboard or temporary structure with the sole aim of expressing the strength and stability of the government; in fact, convention would dictate that an appropriate durable structure and medium - symbolic of the value being expressed - should be used.

As Chandler (1994) noted, a medium is typically treated instrumentally as a transparent vehicle of representation by readers of texts composed within it, but the medium used may itself contribute to meaning. Chandler (1994) provided an analogy of a hand-written letter and a word-processed memorandum which could carry the same verbal text but generate different connotations. In a similar vein, buildings constructed with solid stone in neo-classical

flamboyance could generate a different connotation from that of a building constructed with light combustible stud walls. As noted by Littlejohn & Foss (2008), “media messages are especially intriguing from a semiotic perspective because they usually consist of a fascinating blend of symbols that are organized...to create an impression, transmit an idea, or elicit a meaning in an audience.”

One idea that is aptly applicable to the concept of buildings and architecture as a medium and appropriate for discussion in this study is Marshall McLuhan’s notion that ‘the medium is the message.’ This notion also known as McLuhanism comprises at least four apparent meanings (Chandler, 1994), and is discussed below:

- a) that the medium shapes its content;
- b) that using a medium is important in itself;
- c) that the ‘message’ of a medium is the ‘impact’ it has on society;
- d) that the ‘message’ of a medium is its transformation of the perceptual habits of its users.

McLuhan’s idea that *the medium shapes its content* (i.e. that the nature of any medium has implications for the kinds of experience which can be best handled with it) is quite pertinent in the study of parliamentary architecture. The stature of legislature buildings as high profile political buildings does have an effect on the incessant political and emotionally-charged experience that unfolds in the building’s interior.

McLuhan (1964) postulation that *using a medium is important in itself* (e.g. watching television or reading books are experiences in themselves regardless of explicit content) shore up

the notion of a legislature building being a medium of communication. The process of watching, studying, working and extracting meanings from the physical expression of the architecture of the Alberta Legislature Building are experiences that accentuate the importance of such an architectural edifice as a communication medium. As Eco (1996) noted, people commonly do experience architecture as communication, even while recognizing its functionality. One of the findings of this study suggests that as a medium, it is easier and natural for an audience or users of a building to ‘extract’ messages and meanings from context (surrounding a building) in which they understand and by extension discern the possible messages from the architecture of buildings, as opposed to actively ‘constructing’ meanings out of the function and expression of the building.

The messages conveyed through a political building such as the Alberta Legislature represent the impact that the building has on the society. This statement underscores McLuhan’s postulation that the *'message' of a medium is the 'impact' it has on society*. The Alberta Legislature Building’s messages of power, authority, strength, stability, permanence, etc... are snippets of the impact the Legislature has on the society. As one interviewee noted:

“there is a certain sort of sense of pride and awe when you walk in through the doors and working in the building, no question. It is the absolute political centre of the province and when you think that the output has affected every Albertan since 1912, and will continue to affect the great issues of the day that are discussed.”

As a bona-fide medium of communication for the political establishment in Alberta, the Legislature Building evokes messages that are a function of its visual appearance and contextual

themes. These messages, within reason, reflect the tolerable convention of the audience of the buildings. This is in line with the fourth definition of McLuhanism which states that the 'message' of a medium is its transformation of the perceptual habits of its users. According to Goodman (1985), buildings are not texts or pictures and usually do not describe or depict. This point is corroborated by Whyte's (2006) assertion that architecture is not, in reality, simply a language, and buildings cannot, in actuality, simply be read. The Alberta Legislature Building has a visual prominence as one of the most notable structures on Edmonton's skyline and landscape that is capable of being understood. The Legislature Building has a perceptual quality that enable meanings and messages to be conveyed through the building in manifold ways - including accentuating some of its character – defining elements like the dome, portico, etc... while at the same time leaving out others.

Metaphor, Metaphorical Truth and Literal Falsity

The understanding of metaphor and the concept of metaphorical truth versus literal falsity is useful in understanding the possible messages emanating from and through buildings. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is represented as something else. It should be distinguished from other figures of speech like Synecdoche - a kind of metonymy in which part of something is used to represent the whole. Synecdoche operates more in the realm of symbolism than a metaphor as shown in the example of the use of character-defining elements (with physical expression) such as the dome of the Alberta Legislature Building and mace of the Legislative Assembly to represent the Alberta Legislature and its authority to make law in the province of Alberta. The meanings derived from such symbols and possible messages emanating

from the physical expression of the Legislature Building are manifold. These meanings and messages are a function of understanding, translation, and interpretation.

A metaphorical interpretation or understanding may not need to confine itself to the literal, factual, and historical meanings of the context. As noted by Goodman (1985), “a building may express feelings it does not feel, ideas it cannot think or state, activities it cannot perform.” The Legislature Building was described by one interviewee as “one of those omnipresent structures... [that] has a sparkle from sunrise to sunset...” Metaphorically, these statements hold true but are literally false. For instance, omnipresence is the property of being present everywhere. Literally, the Alberta Legislature Building is stationary in Edmonton but with the aid of television, the internet and other mass media that continually transmit images of the building to every part of Alberta, the structure is symbolically and metaphorically present in the minds of Albertans. Thus, to suggest that the Alberta Legislature Building is omnipresent as noted by the interviewee would be literally false but metaphorically true. The same could be said about the notion of the building possessing a “sparkle from sunrise to sunset” as stated by the interviewee. In order to make sense of the word ‘sparkle’ - which connotes glitter or a bright reflection - that was used in describing a literally lustreless limestone / sandstone finished building, a metaphorical interpretation is vital. In this context, the word ‘sparkle’ may imply a building that possess a ‘no place to hide’ property.

Thus, the concept of metaphorical truth (as it relates to messages conveyed through buildings) means that the properties that a building literally possesses should at all times be accurately representative, whether or not the properties of the building in question are literal or not. In other

words, if the properties of the building were to be a story, the story's implications should be accurate whether or not the details giving the impression really occurred.

The Legislature Building as a Metaphor for Peace, Order and Good Governance

In understanding how buildings communicate, the concept of a metaphor deserves a brief consideration. The essence of a metaphor entails understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. As Chandler (1994) puts it, metaphors express the unfamiliar (known in literary jargon as the 'tenor') in terms of the familiar (the 'vehicle'). The tenor and the vehicle are normally unrelated; however, an imaginative leap is required in order to make the connection that the metaphor illustrates. One consistent message acknowledged and shared by the majority of the interviewees in this study is that political buildings act as metaphors of some sort in many ways. The Alberta Legislature Building is not only a metaphor for the ideals of democracy in Alberta but it is also a metaphor for what Goodsell (2001) calls the civic church. One of the interviewees pointed out this fact during a discussion regarding the grand staircase within the building:

“... the staircase, is it a metaphor?” The interviewee asked rhetorically and continued “...as you go up the stairs into the chamber [the legislative chamber], you are elevating, as you elevate, you are elevating the intellectual approach to issues. One would hope so because the chamber is the place the grand staircase leads to, and what I consider to be the absolute centre of the building. Now, it may not mathematically be the centre of the building but it is the de facto centre as that is where...public policy is debated, discussed and arrived at. So, from my

perspective, it is the most important room when you come into this building through the front door. There is not one day that I come in that I do not feel somewhat in awe, that I work here.”

The interviewee’s description of an orderly, inspirational and sequential approach to the most important space in the building – the Legislative Chambers - as well as the experience of ascension within the Legislature Building is like entering and experiencing a civic church or shrine of democracy which in the Canadian context symbolizes “peace, order and good governance.”¹²

The Legislature Building as a Metaphor for Iconicity, Symbolism and / or Extravagance

The Alberta Legislature Building is considered as a democracy’s temple by many in the province just as it can also serve as a metaphor for a much desired iconic stature and unique identity that seems to elude the city of Edmonton as Alberta’s capital city. The dome of the Legislature Building has been used in many instances by the City of Edmonton as a symbol that embodies the identity of Edmonton as Alberta’s Capital City. The Legislative Assembly Office also uses the dome combined with the legislative assembly mace as dominant elements of its logo to signify the preeminent importance of the legislature as the legitimate government law-making authority, and the symbol of the Legislative Assembly’s authority to make laws for the Province of Alberta.

¹²According to Bélanger (2001), the phrase “peace, order and good governance” has been interpreted by the courts and has been given the meaning of four separate grants of power ,i.e. residuary power, national dimension, emergency power and federal paramountcy. The phrase is an expression and a tripartite motto used in law to express the legitimate objects of legislative powers conferred by statute and in Canada to define values in a way comparable to “liberté, égalité, fraternité” (liberty, equality, fraternity) in France or “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” in the United States.

As a symbol that represents the properties and values within the polity, the Alberta Legislature Building possess the distinctive trait of a symbol that its meaning is not explicitly and literally defined but contains elements and contexts that enable additional layers of meaning to be extracted. For instance, the water features in the forecourt of the Legislature Building (originally designed as a reflective pool) is analogous to the reflective pool in the forecourt of Taj Mahal Mausoleum, a famous monument in Agra – India.

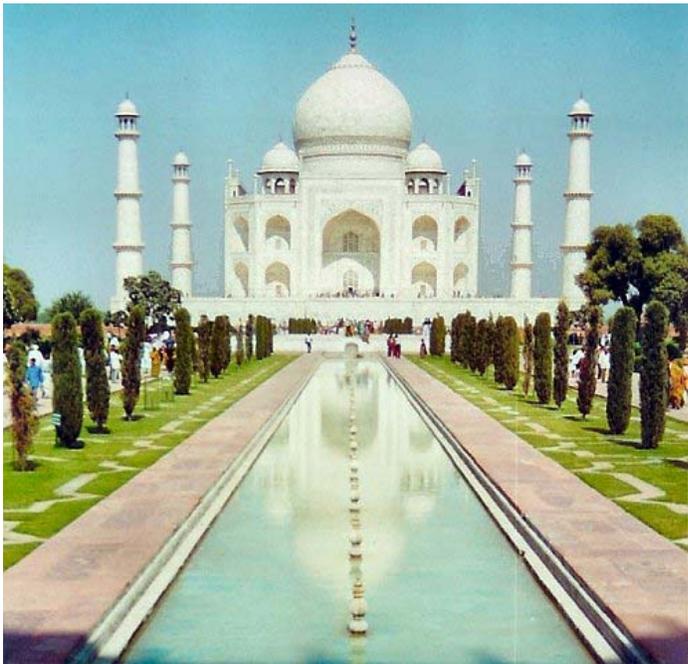


Figure 5: The Taj Mahal in Agra India with water feature in the forecourt...

Source: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/travel-destinations/taj-mahal.html>



Figure 6: The Alberta Legislature Building in Edmonton with water feature in the forecourt...

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/fischer-photos/2045313557/>

In the late 1970's, in opposition (or mockery?) of a proposal to expand the north mall of the Alberta Legislature Grounds that brought about the water feature in the forecourt, a section of the media satirically made a link between the Alberta Legislature Building and the Taj Mahal. The north mall expansion project was portrayed by many as being overly expensive. A cartoon published in the late 1970's in a local newspaper depicted the image of the Legislature Building and forecourt with some semblance to the Taj Mahal (Refer to Figure 7 below). The intent of the cartoon was to ostensibly use the Taj Mahalian-looking Legislature Building (tagged 'Taj Lougheed') as a metaphor to portray the alleged extravagance championed by the then premier of the province (Peter Lougheed).



Figure 7: The “Taj Lougheed” metaphor – A cartoon that captures the sense of some public reaction to the Alberta Legislature North Mall Expansion in 1977.

Source: Glenbow Archives

It is a well known fact that the Taj Mahal Mausoleum standing on the banks of the Yamuna, is the most extravagant monument known to mankind and built as a symbol of eternal enduring love; by transposition (if one ignores the text denotation on the cartoon) the message of extravagance may diminish from the image and one may well argue that the cartoon could well be a metaphor for an enduring love and gift standing on the bank of the North Saskatchewan River from a caring premier of the people of Alberta!

Messages of Strength, Stability and Permanence (Exemplification / Expression – EXM / EXP¹³)

With character-defining elements such as the portico, the entablature and classical orders, the Alberta Legislature Building conveys strength in both a literal and metaphorical manner. This notion of strength is accentuated by one interviewee in the statement below:

“...the building [the Alberta Legislature] communicates a strength in the architecture and certainly its site, sitting up on the bluff overlooking the river valley”

Another interviewee noted that the façade and elements of the Legislature Building exude a particular sense of strength, stability and permanence and a link with the past that not only presents an image of enduring and legitimate state power but also that of dignity and authority. The sheer incorporation of elements of ancient Greek and Roman architecture into the layout and façade of the Alberta Legislature Building conveys a message of strength and solidarity that stem from the heavy materials typically associated with a neo-classical architectural style that not only connects with the distant past but also suggests a logic, law and legitimate governing authority; hence giving rise to the feeling of temporal permanence.

¹³ Refer to Table 1.0 on Page 45 regarding sets of codes and mechanisms for identifying how legislature buildings mean

One interviewee commented that the Alberta Legislature Building evokes themes of stability and permanence while another interviewee, looking at the visual materials containing the image of the building (that was shown to him during the interview), emphatically noted:

“...you can see looking at the columns and the pediments they evoke themes of stability and permanence and a link with quite a distant past, in this case the neoclassical architecture...of Rome and Greece.”

The interviewee goes on to note that:

“one of the ideas that developed out of ancient Greece was the whole notion of democracy, so yes, you could say that there is a link between that in the architectural style and of course you look at these columns, they rise up to this pediment...and then you can see the crest of the Province of Alberta. You know, the building makes a pretty grand statement.”

Messages of Power and Authority (Expression - EXP¹⁴)

The Alberta Legislature Building was seen by a number of interviewees as a symbol of power and authority in the province of Alberta. This is evident in the physical attributes of the building that conveys a message of authority as well as the message of permanence.

Acknowledging the message of power and authority conveyed through the Alberta Legislature Building, one of the interviewees noted that:

¹⁴ Refer to Table 1.0 on Page 45 regarding sets of codes and mechanisms for identifying how legislature buildings mean

“...[the Alberta Legislature Building’s] history, its western civilization, which is the source of our laws and rights, policies, privileges and everything that’s empowered under that dome [is] uniquely powerful as a mass, as a neoclassical design...”

Another interviewee noted that the Beaux-Arts architectural style adopted for the Alberta Legislature Building is used commonly in large public buildings that are meant to express power and authority. As noted by the interviewee, the Beaux-Arts architectural styled design is not just common amongst government and public agencies such as the Alberta Legislature, banks favoured the style in the late 19th to early 20th century because the style symbolized power and authority in what later became a visual prototype (in some ways) for bank architecture.

Messages about a Place of Importance (Mediated reference – MER¹⁵)

The Alberta Legislature Building is located on a historically significant site – the site that was home to Fort Edmonton on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River. The Legislature Building has a visual prominence in a park-like setting combined with an architectural composition that suggests a place of importance and significance. As one interviewee puts it - while describing one possible message he gleaned from his first encounter with the building, “I receive a message that this is a place of importance.” Another interviewee noted that the Alberta Legislature Building “makes a statement of importance” because undoubtedly, the public

¹⁵ Refer to Table 1.0 on Page 45 regarding sets of codes and mechanisms for identifying how legislature buildings mean

policies and laws that are crafted and enacted within the building, “touches everyone who lives here [Alberta].”

Messages about Tradition (Preservation, Articulation and Formation – PRS / ART / FOR¹⁶)

The Alberta Legislature Building has evolved to reflect the political tradition of the province. Most interviewees observed that the possible message of tradition conveyed through the architecture of the Legislature Building is vague or blurred. As one interviewee noted,

“I don’t think that the design [of the Legislature Building] inherently expresses a place or tradition that’s rooted in this particular part of the world but I think that over time, the design has come to symbolize something about Alberta.”

Another interviewee contended that the tradition embodied in the Legislature borders on preservation, articulation and formation that “a whole bunch of people have brought, as well as the ones that were here when they came.” Interviewees agree that the building is often associated with politics because as another interviewee noted, “[the Legislature] absolutely is the political centre of the province of Alberta” He further noted that the sort of unique political culture in this province sees great seismic shifts but they occur rarely.”

One interviewee recounted the political origin and tradition of the province noting that:

“I think there’s no question that the folks that originally conceived the building wanted to demonstrate not only the grandeur and then the promise of the future, but also the fact that there are political institutions that are the product of a largely evolutionary form of

¹⁶ Refer to Table 1.0 on Page 45 regarding sets of codes and mechanisms for identifying how legislature buildings mean

government, which is parliamentary, and those parliamentary institutions go back hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years because Alberta as a political entity was not sketched on a blank canvas, it was against the background of the British-North America (BNA) Act and the Constitution of Canada, which was [previously] the BNA Act...”

The Notion of Being Welcomed (Expression - EXP¹⁷)

Interviewees differ in opinion with respect to whether the Alberta Legislature Building conveys messages that people are welcomed into the building. One interviewee noted that it is very likely that the building was never intended to be welcoming. The interviewee noted that:

“it’s not some place you are supposed to drop in and visit; come in and have tea with the Queen. I don’t think it was ever that. It clearly has a message of “by invitation” and I think it reads like that.”

Another interviewee corroborated this by noting that people visited the building by invitation including school children. The interviewee noted:

“...that’s all expected, it was not a surprise to anyone that you’re there by invitation. So, the welcome is something that’s constructed, its orchestrated. Understanding it though is something different.”

In the words of another Interviewee:

“I would say it’s not as welcoming as it could be, especially not with the security issues [associated with such a building]. You can only go in one door. These buildings were

¹⁷ Refer to Table 1.0 on Page 45 regarding sets of codes and mechanisms for identifying how legislature buildings mean

built like bunkers [and] fortresses and they probably did at one time... They were about government and the separation and it's...not as inviting..."

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from this study and the literature reviewed, the Legislature Building does not have text or words ascribed onto it and as such, this researcher believes that the building cannot denote or be easily comprehended like texts. Nor can the building be read like a public edifice (such as the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC that is denoted); however, the building, through its character-defining elements does express manifold messages that are capable of being understood both literally and metaphorically.

According to Vale (2008) Government buildings will appear to serve several symbolic purposes simultaneously with some of the meanings inherent in the symbol traceable to a designer's or politician's intentions. The rejection of the original Legislature Building designs submitted by Edward Hopkins of Calgary in 1906 and the subsequent development of the design by A. M. Jeffers in 1907 underscores the assumption that certain messages may have been consciously or unconsciously intended to be communicated through the building. Referencing McLuhan's suggestion that "the medium is the message", the possible messages inherent in the meanings and translations deduced from the architecture of the Legislature Building suggests a medium that is independent of language or linguistic mechanism. Put in another way by Eco (1996), people commonly do experience architecture as communication, even while recognizing its functionality.

. This study provided the opportunity to examine how the Alberta Legislature Building conveyed ideas, images and thoughts about political culture of preservation, articulation and

formation to audiences through the application of Goodsell's (1988) postulations regarding functions performed by parliamentary buildings and Goodman's (1985) mechanism for identifying how buildings mean. Through passive observation, case study application and content analysis of possible messages conveyed through buildings as well as the interviews conducted by the researcher, this study confirms the assumption that buildings can function as a communication medium albeit that they do not denote. The study reveals the significant expressive communicative realities that are intrinsic in the character-defining elements of Alberta's most significant historic building; and based on the possible messages, interpretations and meanings gleaned from the architecture of the Alberta Legislature Building, the findings of this study suggests that a legislature or parliamentary building is not only a medium through which messages and meanings are conveyed, it is a repository and an embodiment of the dynamism of the political process and culture of in any society. It is a building that provides an uplifting enlightenment about the history, politics, culture and identity of a people; thus, it is indeed an edifice that educates and truly edifies with messages that are independent of language or linguistic mechanisms. The interpretation of messages conveyed through the Alberta Legislature Building silently draws attention to the fact that meaning does not solely exist in language, media, or messages but in the people who create and consume the messages.

Research Limitations

This study acknowledges some research limitations. For instance, the researcher did not assess in detail, how the emergent dynamic political culture among Members of the Legislative Assembly frames the possible messages emanating from within the core of the Legislature. As well, the

timing of the research did not allow for first-hand interviews with prominent political leaders involved in the operation of the Alberta Legislature.

Suggestions for Future Research and Emerging Trends

Further research on the use of parliamentary buildings as an effective medium to communicate specific public policies is highly recommended. The research should consider using various communication theories such as Daft and Lengel's Media Richness Theory to test the efficacy and richness of the possible messages emanating from public buildings. This will be a very important contribution to the emerging vocation of architectural communication. Another suggested area of research for future consideration with respect to architectural communication is exploration of the role of buildings in the development of regional identity and nationalism.

As noted by Adria (2010), nationalism is led by political and social elites, but it requires the mobilization of a large number of people. Architectural communication can be used to build up a sense of regionalism and nationalism in any society. It can serve as a stabilizing, regenerative force that can be used not just to mobilize large numbers of people but also to enhance the relevance and identity of any society. This is an emerging trend with potential to impact tourism, cultural heritage and sustainability at a very significant level, as demonstrated in the Reichstag Building housing the German parliament in Berlin. Led by political and social elites, the Reichstag Building has been built, burnt, rebuilt and restored over the years. However, after the fall of the Berlin wall and the ensuing post unification era, transparency in government became a recurring theme and a sine-qua-non of the polity. The design of the Reichstag Building

provides an architectural solution that expresses the theme of transparency in a clear and concise manner. The use of architectural elements such as the iconic large transparent glass dome and the light-reflecting glazed cupola, combined with the generous use of natural light and the ability for people to view the main hall of the parliament below from the cupola above, are some of the reasons why the Reichstag Building is one of the most visited attractions in Berlin.

In the Reichstag example, architecture was used as a medium not only to communicate and emphasize values of clarity and transparency relished during the post-unification era in Germany, the building provides an impressive view over the city of Berlin, especially at night, acts as a strong tourism magnet for citizens and visitors alike, and a haven of nationalism where large numbers of Germans are mobilized and made to savour their national pride and identity. The Reichstag Building symbolizes the vigour of the German democratic process; and is a medium through which the German government conveys messages about the relevance of the Bundestag¹⁸ as a democratic forum, a commitment to public accessibility, sensitivity to history and a rigorous environmental agenda.¹⁹ The fostering of sense of nationalism and the enhancement of identity through architectural communication is undoubtedly an area that requires further research.

¹⁸ The main chamber of the German parliament is now called Bundestag ("Federal Diet"). Although the Bundestag is the successor of the earlier Reichstag Institution, the building in which it meets is still called "Reichstag"

¹⁹ Information obtained from foster and partners website retrieved April 1, 2010
<http://www.fosterandpartners.com/Projects/0686/Default.aspx>

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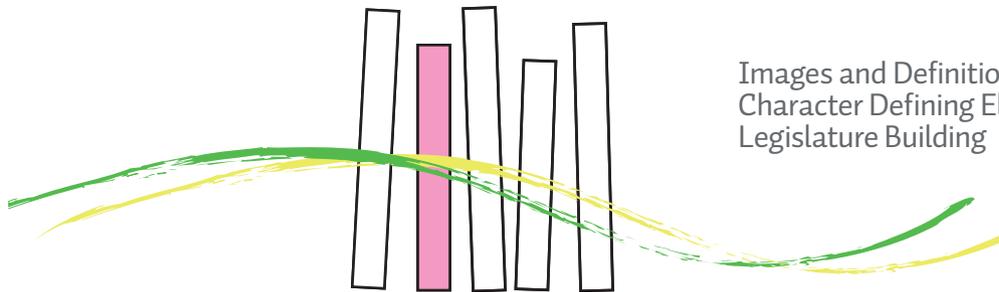
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Appendix **A**

Images and Definitions of
Character Defining Elements of the
Legislature Building



*“A morsel of genuine history is a thing
so rare as to be always valuable.”*

- Thomas Jefferson

Context Analysis +

Images and Definitions of Character Defining Elements of the Legislature Building

A.o Study Location

The site on which the Alberta Legislature Building is located is called the Legislature Grounds or the Alberta Legislature Precinct or the Government Centre every so often.

Located in Edmonton, Alberta's Capital, the boundary of the Precinct or Centre is defined by 109th Street to the west, 99th Avenue to the north, part of 105th and 106th Streets to the east and the River Valley Road by the North Saskatchewan River to the south.

● Legislature Precinct, Edmonton - Alberta.





Photo Credit: Geographic Air Surveys

Aerial View of the Alberta Legislature Precinct and Surroundings



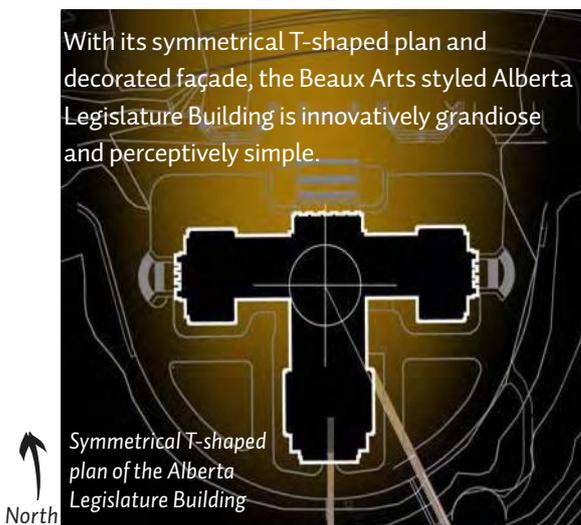


A.1 Identifying the Visual Character-Defining Elements of the Legislature Building

The heritage value of the Alberta Legislature Building resides in the following distinguishing visual character-defining elements as observed and reviewed on site:

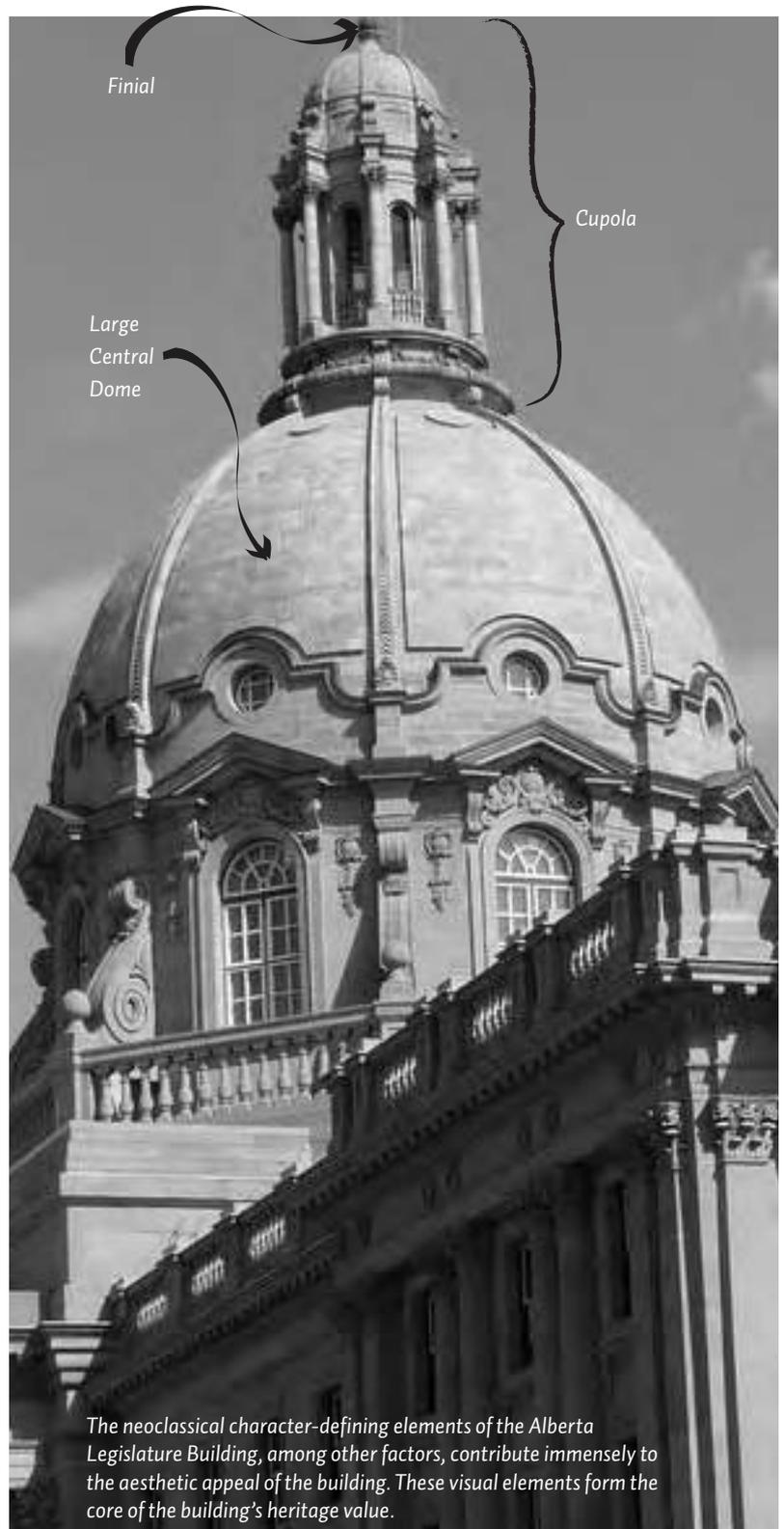
A.1.1 Overall Visual Character: Shape

With its symmetrical T-shaped plan and decorated façade, the Beaux Arts styled Alberta Legislature Building is innovatively grandiose and perceptively simple.



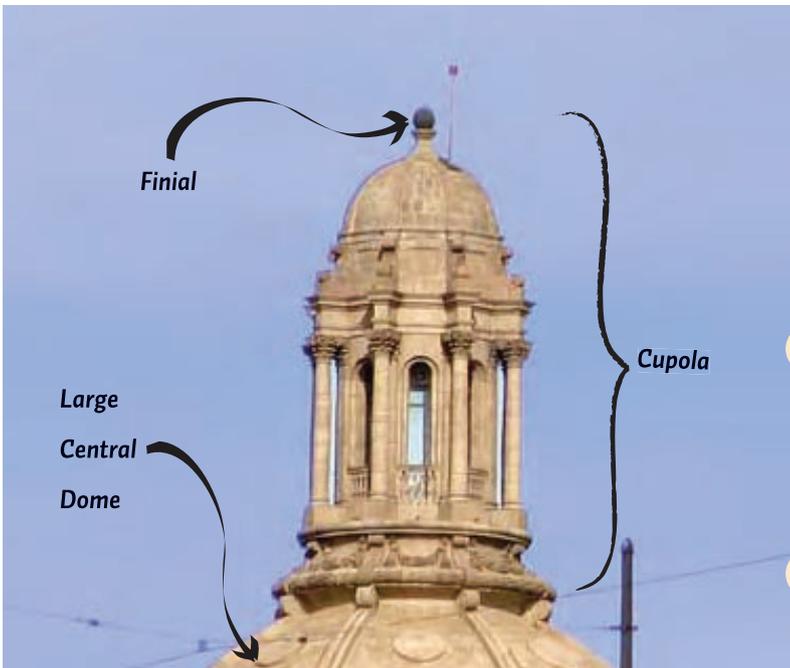
A.1.2 Overall Visual Character: Roof and Roof Features

- Large **Central Dome** – This is the most conspicuous character-defining element of the Alberta Legislature Building. The central dome which symbolically represent power and authority covers a spacious rotunda.



Cupola or Lantern

This is the dome-shaped ornamental structure placed on the top of the large central dome of the Legislature Building. Generally, Cupola is smaller structure affixed to the top of the main dome or roof of the building.



Stone Dormer

A dormer is a window which is set vertically on a roof and has its own roof, which may be flat, arched, or pointed



Roof Trim - Special Features: Finial

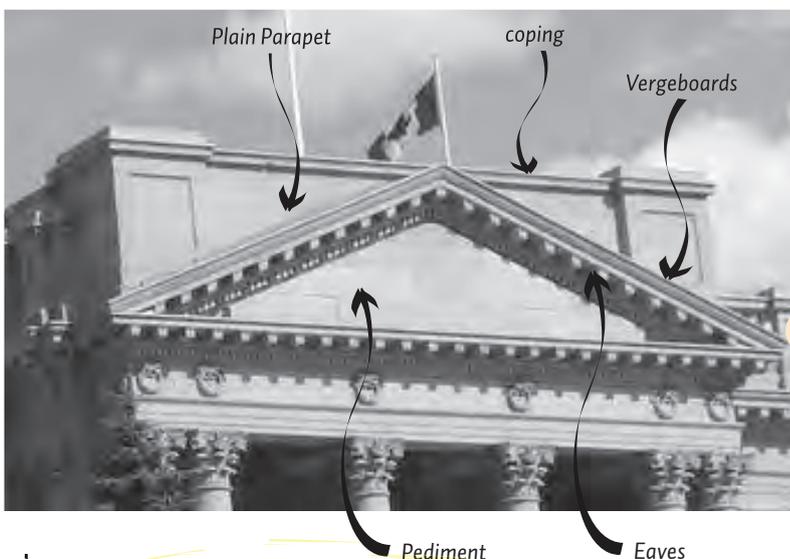
Used on the roof of the Legislature Building, the finial is an architectural element, typically carved in stone and employed to decoratively emphasize the apex of a gable or corner of the building.

Corbel (or console) is a piece of stone jutting out of a wall to carry any superincumbent weight.



Plain Parapet

This is the wall-like barrier noticeable at some of the edge of the building's roof. Typically, plain parapets are upward extensions of the wall, sometimes with a coping at the top and corbel below.



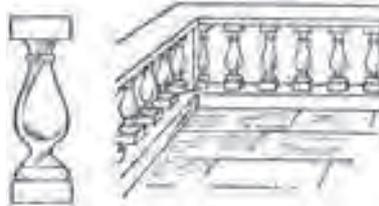
Roof Trim - Vergeboards

A verge refers to the edge of roof covering that project over the gable of a roof. Vergeboards usually hang from the projecting end of a roof and are often elaborately carved and ornamented.



● Roof Trim - Special Features: **Balustrade**

A balustrade is a row of repeating balusters - small posts that support the upper rail of a railing. Typically, balustrades are associated with staircases, balconies, porches, etc; however, on the Alberta Legislature Building, balustrades are not just used for balconies but also on the roof.



Baluster

Balustrade

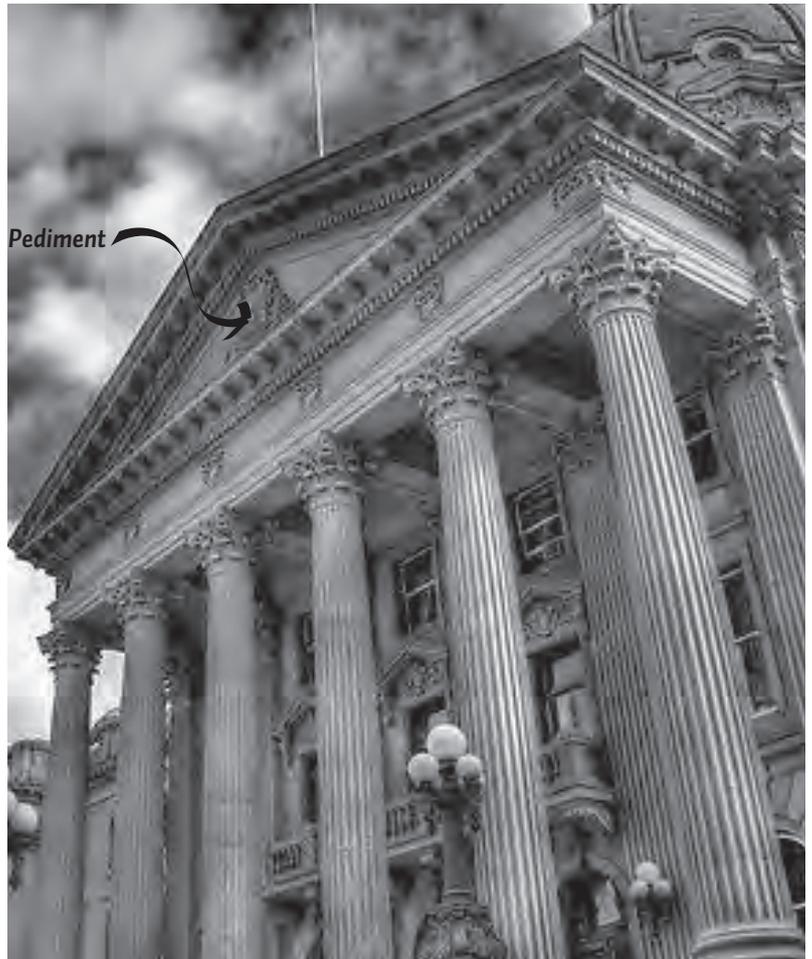
● Roof Trim: **Plain Eaves** - This refers to roof edges that project beyond the sides of the building.



Eaves

● Roof Trim - Special Features: **Monumental Pediment**

This is the low-pitched triangular gable on the front of the Legislature building.



Pediment

Photo: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/chantellemaris/>



Balustrade used on Roof

Balustrade used on Balcony



A.1.3 Overall Visual Character: Openings

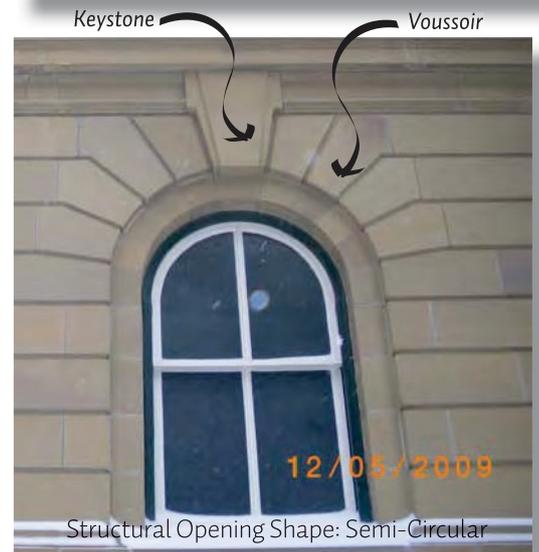
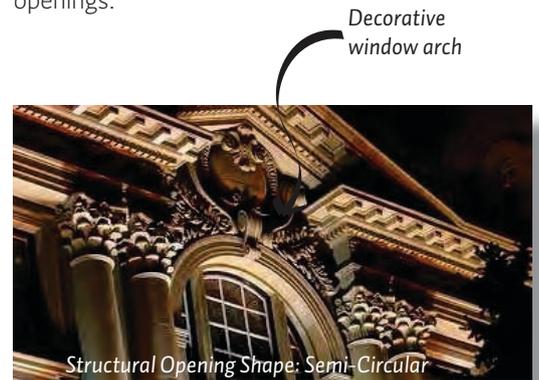
Door and window openings decorated with arches or lintels

- **Large arched entranceway** - Main Entrance.

Structural Opening Shape: Semi-Circular

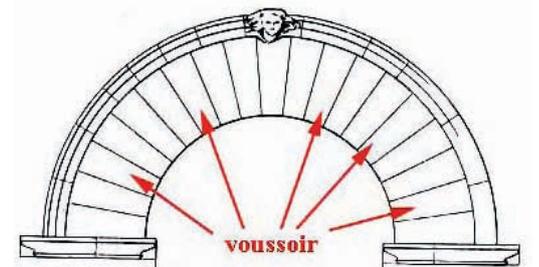


- Decorative **window arches / lintels** that accentuate the importance of the window openings.



- **Voussoirs and Keystone**

A **Voussoir** is a tapered or wedge-shaped block or stone that composes an arch.



Often specified as voussoir components of an arch, the **keystone** is the center stone or masonry unit at the apex of an arch, often decorated, embellished or exaggerated in size.



Decorative window lintel



Decorative window arch



Flat Transom

- **Other window and structural opening features** reviewed in this study include Moulded Sashes, Continuous Sill, Flat Transom, Single Light, Window - Opening Mechanism (Single or Double Hung) and special types of windows such as the **Round Windows** used on the Large Central Dome and a number of façade of the building.



South Facade Clerestory Round Windows

Round window





A.1.4 Overall Visual Character: Projections

Main Entrance Porch

The north facing main entrance porch of the Alberta Legislature Building is a recognizable space leading to the main entrance / rotunda of the building. The entrance porch, preceded by a ceremonial open space (forecourt), is demarcated by frontal Corinthian orders and complementing pilasters.

The entrance porch structure covered by a roof (composed of pediment and entablature) and supported by six ornately designed and constructed Corinthian columns (as well as pilaster wall), is often referred to as the Portico.

The building has three (3) porticos located on the north, east and west facades

● **The Main Portico** located on the north façade of the Alberta Legislature Building, combined with the backdrop of the large central dome, is perhaps the most prominent architectural composition and conceivably the most familiar character defining element of the Alberta Legislature Building. While the main portico accommodates the main entrance porch, the east and west portico structures hold the side balconies of the building.

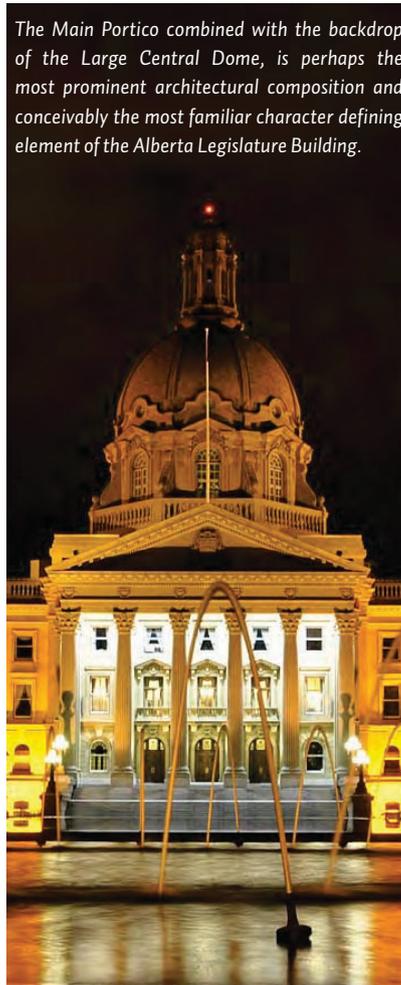
● **Pilaster**

Pilaster is an engaged rectangular upright supporting member, attached to and projecting slightly from the face of a wall and equipped with a base and capital like a column but often used decoratively.

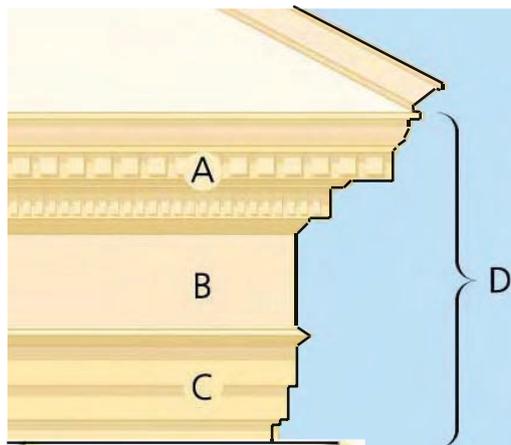
● **Entablature**

The entablature of the Legislature Building is one of the conspicuous character defining elements of the Alberta Legislature Building.

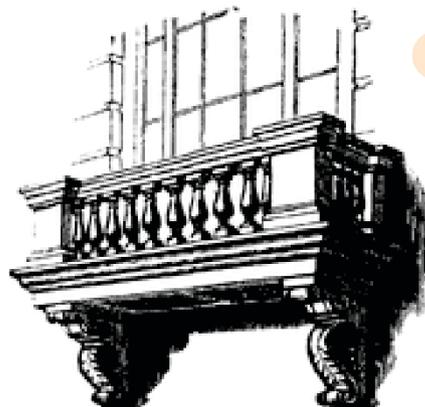
The entablature which is typically the upper part of a classical order (labelled 'D' in the diagram below), is composed of three main elements, namely: **cornice** (A), **frieze** (B) and **architrave** (C). These combined elements sit on top of the **capital** of the ornately designed capital of the **Corinthian Columns** of the Alberta Legislature Building.



Front façade balcony supported by corbels



Composed by Samuel Obiah



● **Balcony**

One consistent feature that is noticeable on all façades of the Alberta Legislature Building is the Balcony. A balcony is a kind of platform projecting from the wall of a building, supported by columns, corbels or console brackets, and enclosed with a balustrade.



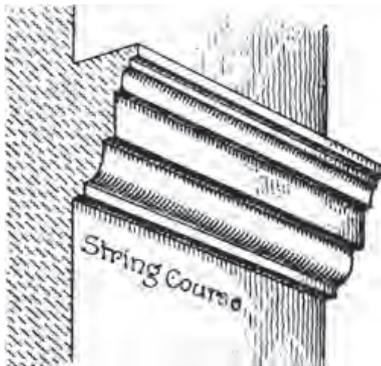
A.1.5 Overall Visual Character: Trim and Secondary Features

● Arcade

This refers to a group of arches on columns or pillars, which are either free-standing or attached to a wall.

● String or Belt Course

This is a common feature on the Alberta Legislature Building. The String or Belt course is a horizontal band of masonry, generally narrower than other courses, extending across the façade of a structure and in some instances encircling such decorative features as pillars or engaged columns; may be flush or projecting, and flat-surfaced, molded, or richly carved.



String / Belt Course

Arcade on east /west façades



...the east, west and south balconies are all supported by arcades, pilasters and columns...

● **Plinth** - This is the base or platform upon which a column, pedestal, etc rests. The Alberta Legislature Building is characterized by its use of substantially sized plinth mainly finished with granite material.



Plinth

south façade balcony

Arcade on south façade



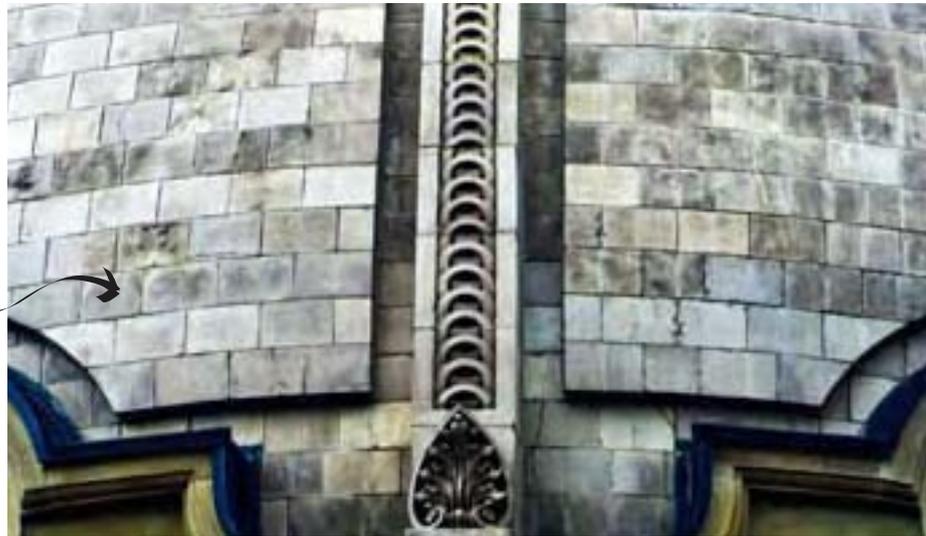
A.1.6 Arm's Length Visual Character: Materials

Exterior Materials:

Granite and Sandstone used on all façades as well as terracotta stone used in areas including the Large Central Dome.

The combination of granite and sandstone on all façades of the building is a unique character defining feature. Granite is used mainly up to the soffit of first storey while sandstone was used for the remaining four storeys.

Terracotta Dome



Sandstone Masonry

Granite Masonry



Photo: flickr.com/photos/35980655@N05/3946284006/





Stained Glass Reflected Ceiling in the Carillon Room

Interior Materials:

The interior of the building features three kinds of marbles. These are green marble - used on the columns and the rotunda walls; light gray marble used as finishing for the floors and staircase; and thirdly, dark gray marble used for the base of the walls and columns.

The marbles were used in concert with other materials such as terrazzo floor, wooden materials such as mahogany, oak, stained glass windows and brass fittings.

Marble finish to column and balustrades in the Rotunda



Photo: flickr.com/photos/woodhead/2629274693/

Photo: flickr.com/photos/wojtaszek/234529937/



Wooden doors

The use of hand-carved mahogany and oak solid doors constitute some of the main attractive features as well as distinguishing character defining component of the Legislature Building

Brass Hardware and Fittings

The use of brass material in the Alberta Legislature Building is noticeable on hardware, elevator doors, handrails, plaques, etc. This is a character defining feature of the building.



Photo: flickr.com/photos/8812741@N02/2634624557/

Hand-carved Mahogany Door



Photo: flickr.com/photos/label/380746785/

Brass Elevator Door



Brass Door Hardware - Legislative Chamber



Brass Plaque at the Rotunda



Brass Door Hardware - Main Entrance



A.1.7 Arm's Length Visual Character: Craft Details

The splendor of the Alberta Legislature Building is exemplified in the excellent craftsmanship and craft details visible throughout the building. These details include stonework, carvings, decorations, etc.

- **Decorative hardwood carvings** within the building include coats of arms above the main entrance to the Chamber, above the Speaker's Chair, and in the Carillon Room on the fifth floor, carving of Alberta's shield of arms on hardwood doors, etc.

Alberta's Coat of Arms carved out of hardwood

Photo: flickr.com/photos/8812744@N02/2634626887/

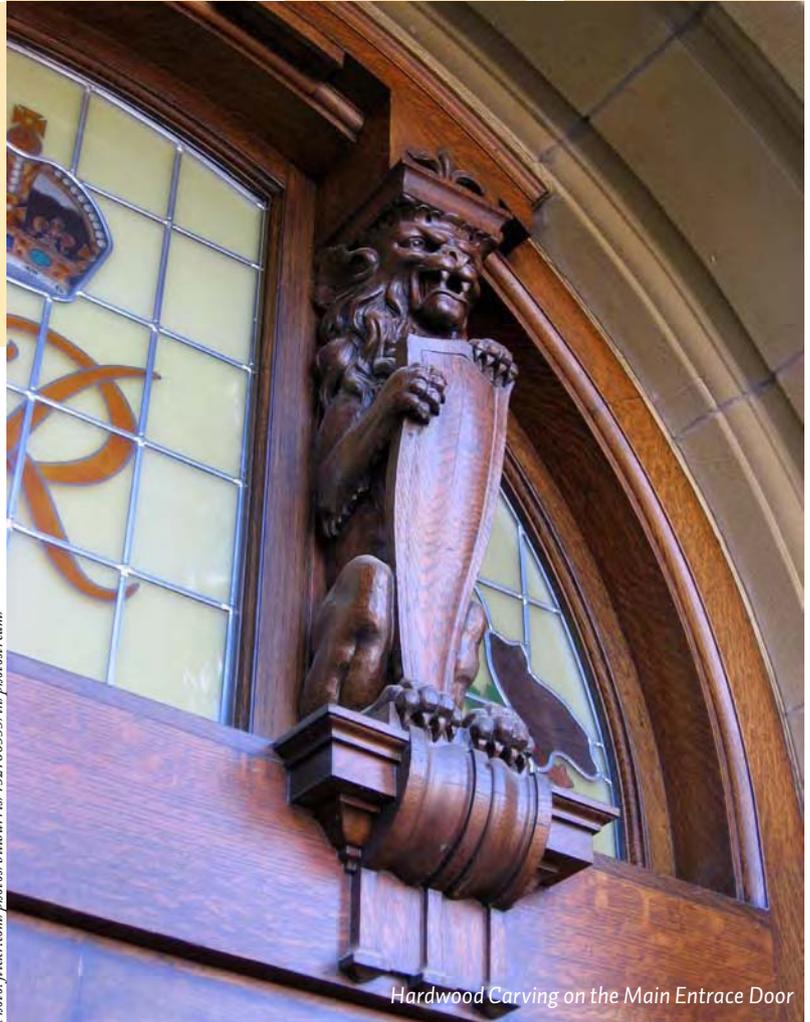


Photo: flickr.com/photos/hillburris/452740420/



Hardwood Carving on Legislative Chamber Door

Photo: flickr.com/photos/hillburris/452760555/in/photostream/

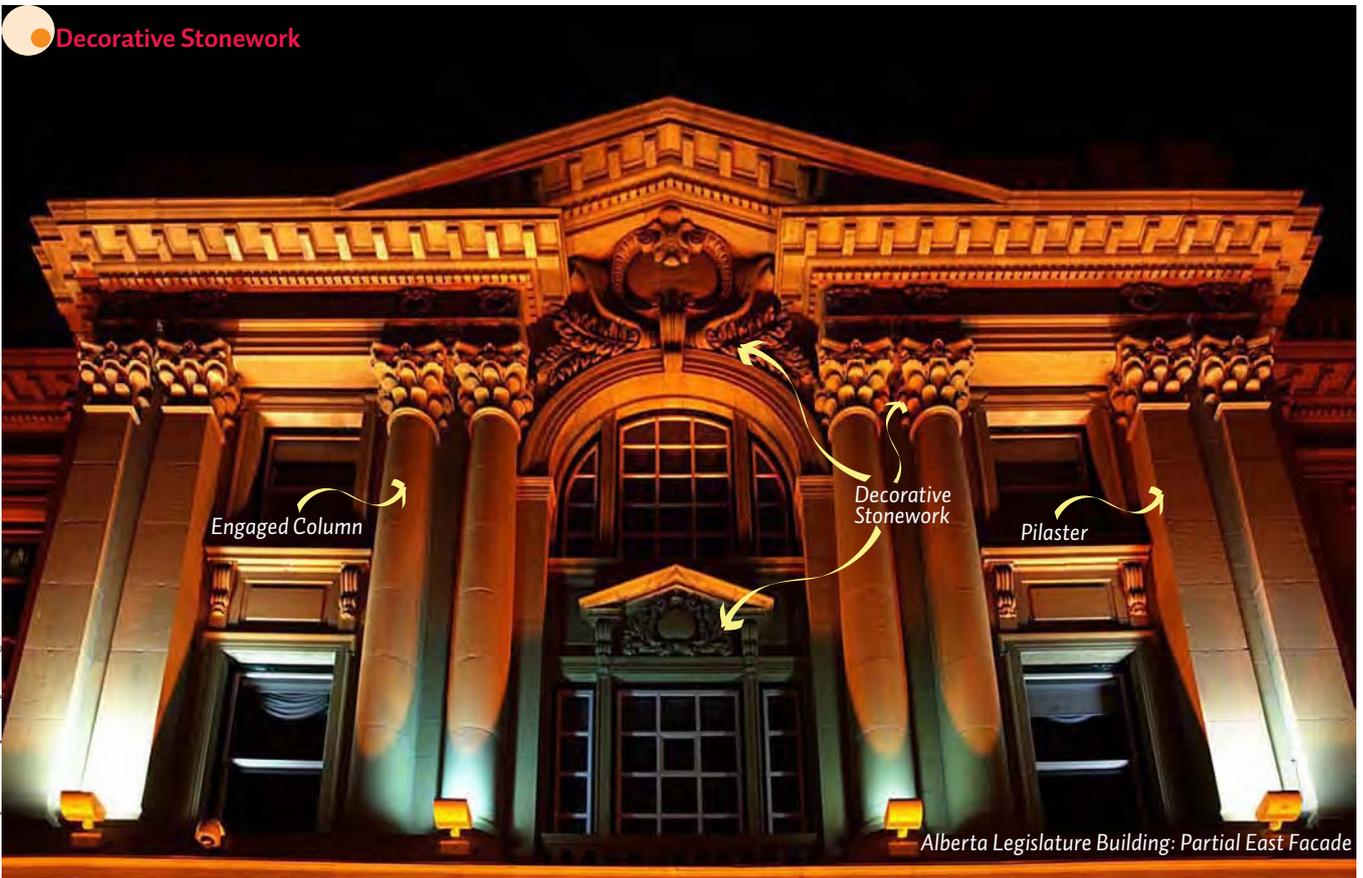


Hardwood Carving on the Main Entrance Door





*Decorative Stonework on the Alberta
Legislature Building: Details of
Entablature and Corinthian Capital*



Decorative Stonework

This is a unique and substantial character-defining feature of the Alberta Legislature Building that is present on all façades of the building. The most outstanding decorative stonework and craft details in the building can be seen on the capital of the Corinthian columns (colonnade), pilasters as well as the engaged columns used in the building.

An **Engaged Column** is a column attached to, or partly built into, a wall or pier. (Also called applied column or attached column) while a **Colonnade** is a row of columns carrying an entablature or arches.

Classical Orders⁸: Corinthian and Ionic Columns

A column refers to a circular upright support, consisting of a base, shaft and capital. Although a simplified Ionic column was used within the Legislature Chamber, Corinthian column is the main type of column used on both the exterior and interior of the Alberta Legislature Building.

As one of the three biggest classical orders of ancient Greek and Roman architecture, the Corinthian order is the most ornate column. It is characterized by a slender fluted column and an elaborately decorated capital (often acanthus leaves and scrolls).

⁸ The term 'Order' refers to a classical column arrangement, including the base, shaft, and capital, which support the entablature.



A.1.8 Interior Visual Character: Individually Important Spaces and Sequence of Related Spaces

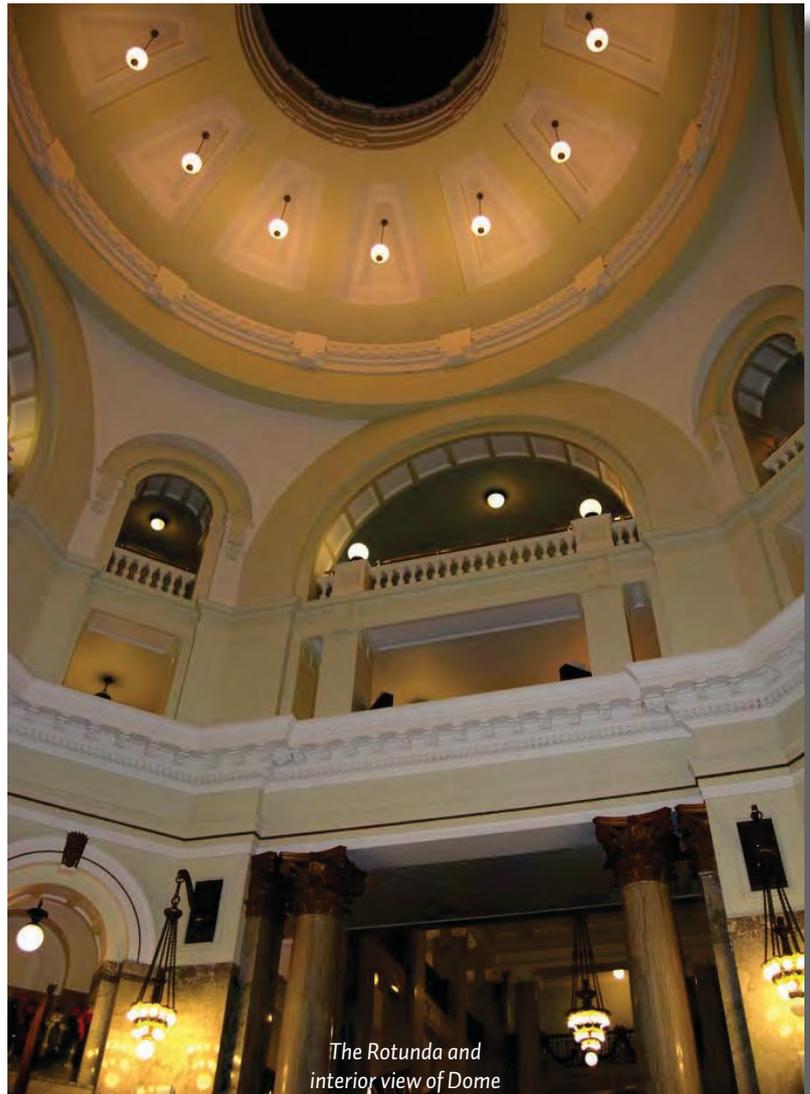
Some of the unique individually important spaces that distinguish the Alberta Legislature Building from others include:

- **The Rotunda** - for its size, height, proportion, configuration and multi purposed function.
- **The Grand Stairway** – for its elegance and use as a ceremonial procession route and access to the Legislature chamber, the Premier and the Lieutenant Governor’s office.
- **The Legislature Chamber** - the focal and most reverential space within the building.
- **The Carillion Room** – 391 finely tuned bells were installed not only to create electronically amplified music but to also commemorate Canada’s Centennial anniversary.

Although the Carillion has been removed for repairs, the room with its special stained glass ceiling is a unique character distinguishing feature of the building.

● **Sequence of Related Spaces**

The Main Entrance Porch, Vestibule, the Rotunda, the Grand Stairway and the Legislative chamber are visually and physically related because, as one moves through these spaces, they are perceived not as separate spaces, but as a sequence of related spaces that defines the interior character of the Alberta Legislature Building.



Although the Rotunda as an individually important space is of a generous size, majestic height and admirable proportion, more importantly, it visually relates to the Grand Stairway off of it. The Grand Stairway is the second part of this sequence of related spaces, and it provides continuing access to the Legislative Chamber on the upper floor.





Portrait of Queen Mary at the Alberta Legislature



Statue of Princess Louise Caroline Alberta



Statue of Chief Crowfoot in the Rotunda

A.1.9 Interior Visual Character: Miscellaneous Art Features

Sculptures: Inside the rotunda are two bronze statues, one of Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, after whom the province is named, and one of Chief Crowfoot, a Blackfoot Indian leader whose policy of cooperation led to the peaceful settlement of Alberta.

Paintings: Portraits of Premiers and Lieutenants Governor adorn the walls of the third floor, while the portraits of Past Speakers of Alberta Legislative Assembly can be viewed on the fourth floor of the building.

Other interior features of the building include (but not limited to) the marble-finished water fountain that was constructed to commemorate Queen Elizabeth's first official visit to the Alberta Legislature Building; the five palm trees⁹ located in the dome above the Rotunda; memorial plaques; and the portraits of Alberta's famous 5.



Portrait of Alberta's Famous 5



Palm Trees located in the Dome



Portrait of King George V on the 4th floor

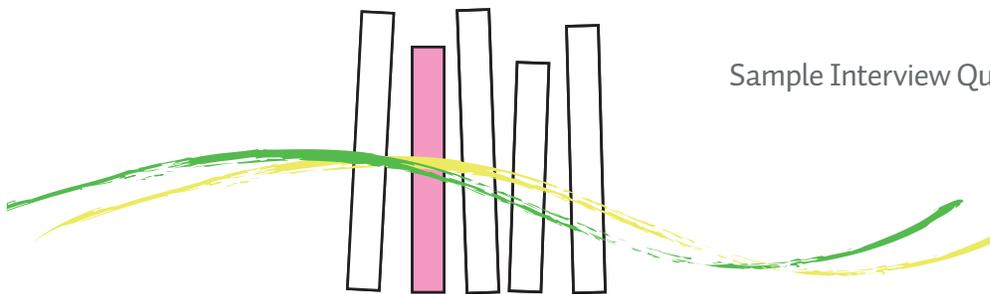
⁹ these palm trees have been grown from seeds, given to Alberta by the State of California.





Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions



“The beginning of knowledge is the discovery of something we do not understand.”

- Frank Herbert

Potential Questions for Interviewees

This research seeks to explore the communication attributes of the architecture of legislature buildings. Focusing on the Alberta legislature building in Edmonton (as a case study), my aim is to examine what messages, ideas or statements are expressed or communicated through the architecture of the building.

Interviewees will be provided with photographs of the Legislature Building from different eras (between 1912 and 2009) and will be asked to identify political / cultural expressions or other kind of messages that are obvious to interviewees from the image of the legislature building.

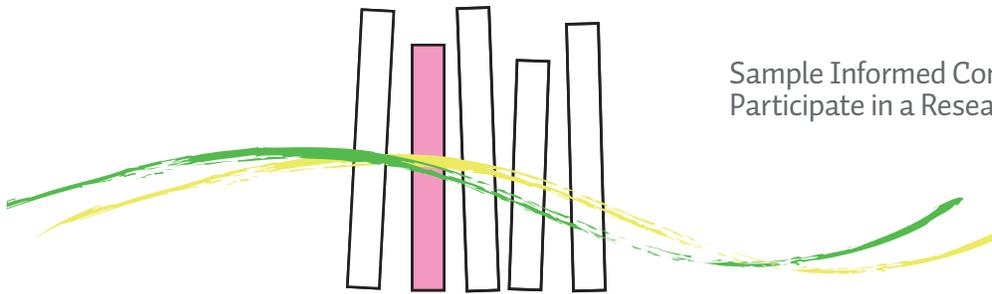
The questions noted below are sample questions intended to serve as guideline or a road map for the interview:

- 1) Tell me about experience(s) or interaction(s) you have had with the Alberta Legislature Building?
- 2) How would you describe the architectural style of the Legislature building?
- 3) Do you think that there is a correlation between the style of the building architecture and the function or role it performs?
- 4) Do you consider the Alberta Legislature building as an expressive building? If Yes, explain how and If give reasons.
- 5) Legislature buildings are usually associated with politics, power and governance. What aspect or elements of the Alberta Legislature building (as seen in these photos) do you think capture this attribute?
- 6) What elements of the building symbolize or represent tradition, stability and authority?
- 7) What aspect or elements of the building inspire you? Please explain.
- 8) What communicative function or attributes do you think a building such as the Legislature building may possess?
- 9) In your view, does the building embody the image or commanding presence of the state? If yes, what elements of the building best depict this notion?
- 10) How well does the building help in evoking ideals of identity and pride associated with Alberta and Albertans?
- 11) What aspect of the building conveys ideas, images and thoughts about the history of the province to you?
- 12) Do you see the building as an effective medium that government or people of Alberta can use in communicating Alberta's culture to the world?
- 13) What does elements like the pediment, grand stairs, rotunda, the dome, the materiality of the building, etc depict
- 14) Would you say the image of the building provides any clear message to you?
- 15) Kindly provide narratives (in your own words) on what the building means to you.

- 16) Other than Beaux Arts influence, do you think there was any Masonic influences on the design of the building?
- 17) How does the Alberta Legislature Building fare in terms of communicating government policies When you compare it to other Legislature buildings elsewhere (that you've visited)
- 18) Do you think there's any element missing that would have enhanced the communication capability of the building?
- 19) Do you have anything to add?
- 20) How did the interview feel for you?

Appendix C

Sample Informed Consent to
Participate in a Research Study



*“To acquire knowledge, one must
study. To acquire wisdom, one must
observe.”*

- Marilyn vos Savant



Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of study: Edifice that Edifies: Understanding the Expressive Communication Attributes of the Architecture of Legislature Buildings - A Case Study of Alberta Legislature Building

Researcher: Samuel Oboh, MSc,
Principal Investigator
Phone: 780-886 0490
oboh@ualberta.ca

Institute / Faculty: Faculty of Extension

Introduction - Invitation to participate in research:

I am conducting research on the communication attributes of the architecture of legislature buildings. Focusing on the Alberta legislature building in Edmonton (as a case study), the research will examine what messages, ideas or statements are expressed or communicated through the architecture of the building. I would like to ask for your voluntary participation in this research study. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Background information:

Legislature buildings can be found in every provincial capital in Canada and other democratic jurisdictions around the world. Legislature buildings are the most prominent symbol of government. They are usually associated with politics, power and governance and as such, they attract attention. Conversely, legislature buildings should not only be seen as an instrument of political power but also as a medium that edifies and communicates messages that people interpret as statements and representations of cultural significance and history.

Purpose of this research study:

The purpose of the study is to examine the concept of communication through the architecture of legislature buildings; and to understand what messages are transmitted and received through the architecture of the Alberta legislature building.

Possible risks or benefits

There is no foreseeable physical or health risk involved in this study except your valuable time. It should be noted that some interviewee statements and assertions that may be deemed unfavourable by some government department have the potential of inviting repercussions from such government department. Respondents are assured that all effort will be made ensure the anonymity of all participants. To mitigate such potential risk, conversations during the interview

process will be limited to topics about the communication realities and perception of the architecture of the building. There is no direct benefit to you. However, the benefits of participation include the knowledge that your involvement will contribute to understanding how buildings can be used as a medium to edify and communicate and the information from the study may make it possible to improve design decisions and use of legislature buildings as an effective medium of communication for the future.

Use of Information: The study is for partial fulfilment of the requirement for Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology program, Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta. The information you share will be used for completion of the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology and the research results may be published in journal and elsewhere without giving your name or disclosing your identity.

Research Procedures:

During interviews, you will be provided with photographs and asked to identify political / cultural expressions or other kind of messages that are obvious to you from the image of the legislature building. I would also like you to provide narratives on what the building means to you. You are asked to participate in only one interview session. This will take about one to one and a half hours of your time.

The interview session will be tape recorded in order to save time and so that I can focus more on the interview rather than note taking. Your consent to use audio recorder will be obtained prior to the interview and recordings will be transcribed for later analysis. No video recording will be done.

Verification / Review

Audio taped interview will be transcribed, coded and analysed to espouse messages such as opinions, characteristics, representations of meaning and statements emanating from the legislature building. Synopses of findings may be sent to interviewees in order for them to review and confirm if content accurately reflect their input.

Voluntary participation, right of refusal to participate and withdrawal of data

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may refuse to answer some or all the questions if you don't feel comfortable with those questions. As well, you may withdraw any time from the study without any negative consequences. Participants should note that they have a two week time period after completion of interview to withdraw their data from the study.

Anonymity

The information provided by you will remain confidential. Nobody except me, the principal investigator will have an access to it. Your name and identity will also not be disclosed or shared at any time.

Data collected during the interview will be archived on researcher's computer with password. Data obtained on paper (hard copy) will be scanned and stored digitally as part of the archive on researcher's computer and / or a CD that will be securely locked in a cabinet in researcher's residence. At the expiration of 5 years following completion of research, the collected data will be permanently deleted from the system and / or destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and anonymity of participants.

Conflict of Interest Declaration:

I am not aware of any conflict of interest in my position to carry out this research.

Obtaining copy of research findings:

Participants interested in receiving a copy of report of research findings should inform me during the interview or after the interview by e-mail provided in this form.

Available Sources of Information

If, at any time, you have questions or concerns about the research, you can contact me, Samuel Oboh (Principal Investigator), graduate student in the Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology program at the University of Alberta on following phone number 780-886 0490 or 780-969 8841 or e-mail oboh@ualberta.ca

You can also contact Marco Adria, PhD, Associate Professor of Communications and Director of the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology program on phone number 780-492-2254 or via e-mail marco.adria@ualberta.ca

Compensation

Unfortunately, this research is not being funded by any agency, organization or grant. As a result, there are no funds to offer you in compensation of your time. However, there are also no costs to you for participating in the research.

Ethics Approval Statement

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB at (780) 492-3751.

AUTHORIZATION

By signing this form I am attesting that I have read and understand this consent form, and I voluntarily choose to participate in this research study. I understand that I will be provided with two copies of this form; one to be signed and returned to the researcher and one to be kept by me for my own records. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable federal, provincial, or municipal laws.

Participant's Name (Printed or Typed):
Date:

Participant's Signature or thumb impression:
Date:

Principal Investigator's Signature:
Date:

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:
Date: