***Ottawa Public Law Tour – Track 6 Legal Ottawa***

**Transcription of podcast**

Track 6: Legal Ottawa. You are now in what is essentially the federal legal district of Ottawa. Before looking closely at the Supreme Court building, turn around and look south across Wellington Street. Across that street are two impressive-looking green, bronze-roofed buildings, the East and West Memorial Buildings. Built after the Second World War, the East Memorial Building at 284 Wellington, directly across the road from the Supreme Court, is now the headquarters of the federal Department of Justice.

Now turn to face east down the street and look at the castle-like building just to the east of the Supreme Court building. Called the Justice Building, this 1935 edifice once housed the Justice Department, and before that, the RCMP. And indeed, in Ian Fleming’s James Bond story, *For Your Eyes Only*, James Bond visits the RCMP in this building. Fleming described the building as “a massive block of gray masonry, built to look stodgily important, and to withstand the long and hard winters.” At the end of the 1990s, the building was renovated and now is used for Members of Parliament offices.

Our journey through the next few stops allows us to focus on the three branches of government: judicial, legislative, and executive. Geography dictates that the first stop is the judicial branch. And so focus now on the Supreme Court building. Depending on when you listen to this, you may need to peer at it around a highly controversial Memorial to the Victims of Communism or the construction of this memorial. But as I record this in mid-2015, the design and location of that aesthetically controversial memorial in the greenspace in front of the Supreme Court, once reserved for a new Federal Court building, is a subject of political acrimony and a court challenge on administrative law grounds in the federal court – a modest but interesting public law dispute about which many of you will read in the newspapers, and eventually, no doubt, in your law books.

Whether you need to make your way around such a memorial, its construction, or instead, a brand new court building, make your way now to the Supreme Court building. This building, built in 1937, conveys austerity but also majesty. I am not a litigation lawyer and I have never argued in front of the Supreme Court, but those who have describe how intimidating that experience can be, and part of the reason must be the majesty of the physical environment.

Note the famous statues on either side of the entrance: Justice and Truth. Approach the statue on the east side of the entrance, Justice. If you position yourself just right and look towards the Parliament buildings, you can arrange a fabulous image of the statue in profile with the Peace Tower, a favorite image for the cover of some law books and media stock images. That image in some way conveys the creative tension in our public law between constitutional supremacy and the role of the courts in defending our constitution and the older tradition of parliamentary sovereignty, a hard-won concept that in the United Kingdom history moved that society from monarchical tyranny to a functional representative democracy – the same style of democracy that we enjoy in Canada today.

You can visit the inside of the Supreme Court, take tours, and sit in on cases. You’d be crazy not to take advantage of your proximity to the country’s highest court while a law student. You may want to take a walk also around the back of the Court and peer down at the river you have been following and at the landscape around it. If the court is in session, perhaps you will spy a nervous-looking lawyer or two mumbling under their breath as they rehearse submissions.

But in our tour, it is time to make our way to Parliament Hill itself. Go back to Wellington and walk now along Wellington to the main entrance to Parliament Hill. As you will do so, walking east, you will pass that Justice Building that once housed the RCMP, and then a very similar looking impressive building, the Confederation Building, which is on your left, housing now parliamentary offices.

Keep going up Wellington to the entrance onto Parliament Hill just before Metcalfe Street. As you walk, you will see many buildings on the south side of the road. There is the Wellington Building, which contains House of Commons administrative offices. Next to it, at 150 Wellington, is the National Press Building, the somewhat cramped home of the Parliamentary press corps. At 140 Wellington is the Victoria Building containing Senate offices and hearing rooms.

When you reach that entrance to the Hill, the one that takes you into Parliament Hill and to the Eternal Flame, stop this podcast and restart it at Track number 7.

<end of Track 6>