

**Canada's Response:
The Making and Remaking of the National War Memorial**

by

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**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral
Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts

in

History

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario**

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ISBN: 978-0-494-93554-5

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ISBN: 978-0-494-93554-5

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ABSTRACT

In the years following the First World War, the Government of Canada erected a National War Memorial in the capital city of Ottawa. The monument was pre-eminently a commemoration of the service and sacrifices of Canada's overseas armed forces, but it was also conceived and created as a national project with larger aims emphasising domestic unity and the country's unique war experience, and presenting a positive and inspiring message to Canadians. The memorial, called *The Response* to capture Canada's answer to the call to duty in 1914, was not unveiled until May 1939. After the Second World War, the role and meaning of the monument underwent a remaking. As a result of debates surrounding efforts aimed at another national commemorative war monument in the capital, it became apparent that the National War Memorial had come over the years to represent for Canadians not one war but all of their wars.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by expressing my great appreciation for the assistance offered to me by my supervisor, Professor Norman Hillmer. In the writing of this thesis, his insight, guidance, and expertise have proven invaluable. Without him, this project might never have begun and certainly would not have developed into what it is today. It has been a privilege and an honour to have had him as an advisor, mentor, and a friend.

Many thanks are owed to the members of my examination committee. Professors Tim Cook, Ruth Phillips, and Paul Litt each provided valuable insights that have presented me with a number of considerations for the expansion and development of my research. A great debt is also owed to the Graduate Administrator of the department of history, Joan White, whose tireless work behind the scenes, and willingness to answer the many questions I had along the way, made this process much easier.

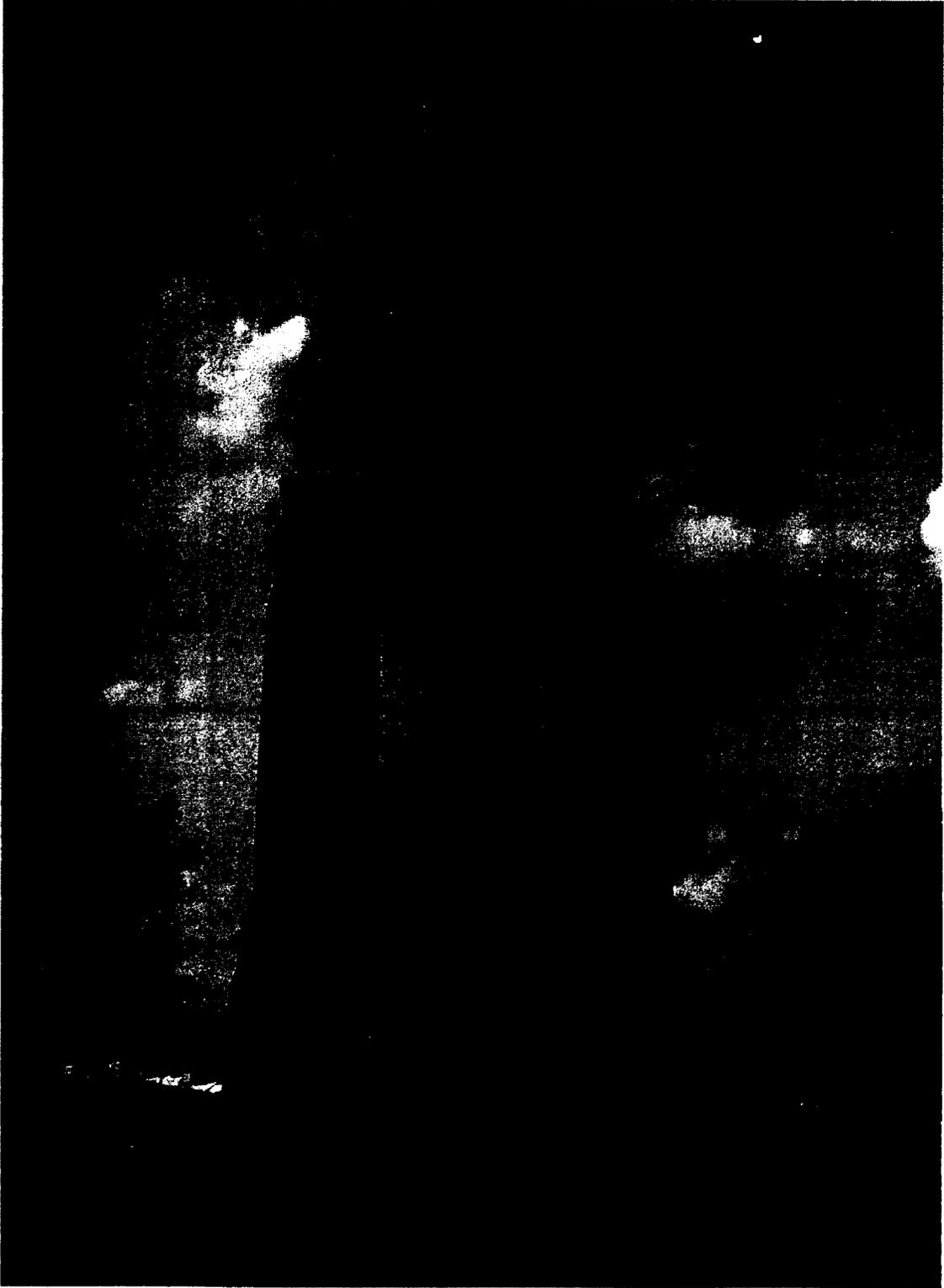
I would also like to thank my family for their love and support throughout this process. In particular, a great debt is owed to my father, whose expert editing skills were always available to me. His help over the years has shaped me into the writer that I am today.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Karolyn. Despite the many long nights working on this thesis, she was always there to provide love and encouragement, and to bring me late night coffees to keep me going. This work I dedicate to her.

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THE NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL



The National War Memorial, Ottawa (Photo: Malcolm Ferguson, September 15, 2012)

INTRODUCTION

In May 1923 Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King announced to the House of Commons that the Government of Canada would erect a monument in commemoration of the nation's accomplishments and sacrifices during the Great War. Shortly thereafter, the government determined the form it wanted the memorial to take and those ideas it believed the monument should convey to Canadians. In 1925 a competition was held that was open to all British subjects, as well as citizens of the allied countries during the war.¹ From the 127 submissions, the proposal by British sculptor Vernon March, titled *The Response*, was selected as the winning design because it most closely fulfilled the government's original vision of the memorial. The Prime Minister agreed with the competition judges' selection and wrote that, when the monument was completed, "the capital will, I think, have one of the finest war memorials in the world."²

Alterations to the memorial's design, the death of March, the economic depression of the 1930s, and debates surrounding the site for the memorial all delayed the completion of the monument. On May 21, 1939, *The Response* was officially unveiled by King George VI, only months before the outbreak of another world war. The monument was located in the newly constructed Confederation Square in Ottawa, and dedicated to the Canadian soldiers who fought, were wounded, and died during the conflict. In the decades that followed, the role and purpose of the memorial changed. The National War Memorial evolved to become more than a commemoration of a single conflict. Later efforts to develop additional national commemorations of war indicate that by the late

¹ Library and Archives Canada [henceforth LAC], RG 25, vol. 337, "Conditions of Competition for National Commemorative War Monument," 1925, 6.

² LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, William Lyon Mackenzie King [henceforth WLMK] to J.H. King, January 22, 1926.

1950s and early 1960s Canadians understood the memorial to remember the Canadians who served in all wars.

To understand the origins of the National War Memorial, it is necessary to know the context in which the project emerged. Prior to the First World War, Canada had little experience with the creation of national war memorials.³ While there were many memorials erected to honour particular regiments and commanding officers, few monuments were dedicated to the actions of all participants in Canada's wars. With the high death tolls and the creation of citizen rather than professional armies, the Great War led to a desire to create memorials that recognized the sacrifices of all those who lost their lives. The years following the First World War witnessed a number of commemorative initiatives undertaken across the country to honour the nearly 620,000 Canadian soldiers who enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force and the country's 60,000 war dead. The forms that these commemorations took varied significantly, indicative of individual communities' preferred method of memorializing their dead. Commemorative plaques, monuments, memorial halls, the renaming of streets after European battlefields, and a host of other forms of commemoration were created throughout the country.

The post First World War period was a time of unprecedented commemoration. Nearly every community felt it necessary to honour their veterans and those who did not return. The commemorative impulse that existed during these years extended overseas, and resulted in the creation of monuments in Western Europe that recognized Canadians'

³ For reference to the following discussion regarding Canada's pre-First World War commemoration see, Jacqueline Hucker, "After the Agony in Stony Places: the Meaning and Significance of the Vimy Monument," in *Vimy Ridge: a Canadian Reassessment*, eds. Geoffrey Hayes, Andrew Iarocci, and Mike Bechthold (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 279-290.

contribution to the war effort and memorialized those Canadians who would never leave the battlefield. Marking the sites of European battlefields in which Canadians played a significant role, grand monuments such as the Vimy Memorial were erected which immediately became perceived as important sites of national remembrance and mourning for Canadians.⁴

While the federal government almost immediately initiated plans to create memorials in Europe, local organizations and politicians across the country discussed how best to commemorate Canada's war effort at home. With so many possible means of honouring the dead, committees responsible for the creation of memorials debated which form their memorials would take. A possible solution to this question emerged in May 1919. Former Minister of Militia and Defence, Sir Sam Hughes, proposed that a standardized memorial be created that could be mass produced and would vary in size depending on the number of soldiers the village, town, or city had lost. He believed that this form of commemoration would make it readily apparent to residents and visitors alike the extent to which the community contributed to the national war effort.⁵ The plan was ultimately rejected, but Hughes was not alone in his call for national centralized control over commemorations of the First World War. The popular publication *Saturday Night* expressed a similar opinion on the matter in April 1919, when it called for the creation of a national committee to oversee local commemorative efforts.⁶ The decision concerning the standardization and centralization of war commemoration ultimately fell to the Minister of Militia, Major-General S.C. Mewburn. On May 20, 1919, the Minister

⁴ Serge Durflinger, "Safeguarding Sanctity: Canada and the Vimy Memorial during the Second World War," in *Vimy Ridge*, 289.

⁵ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 203.

⁶ *Ibid.*

responded to Hughes and any others who might support this initiative by unequivocally stating, “Standardization of objects of general use is no doubt a good thing as tending to cheapness of production; but it is not clear that standardization of objects of art and things beautiful or ornamental is a good thing... different locations should erect their own monuments.”⁷

Despite sporadic calls for centralized control over memorialization, each community became responsible for selecting the most appropriate way to express their individual experiences with the war. As Robert Shipley notes in his study of Canadian war commemoration, the federal government was incapable of financing all of the many commemorative efforts being undertaken across the country at this time.⁸ Because of the tremendous war debt the nation was carrying, the federal government restricted its involvement in commemorative projects to a bare minimum.⁹ There were, however, a select few commemorative initiatives in Canada which the government undertook because it considered them to be of a national significance. Such was the case with the National War Memorial.

While the government eventually decided to go ahead with the National War Memorial project, the decision to erect a national commemorative war monument in the capital was not a certainty at the end of the Great War. Just as local committees were debating how they would honour their veterans and war dead, the government explored a number of commemorative options in the immediate post war years. One of the first

⁷ A transcript of Minister Mewburn’s remarks can be found in Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place: a History of Canadian War Memorials* (Toronto: NC Press, 1987), 62.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁹ The limited number of commemorative efforts in which the federal government became involved during the period included eight memorials in Europe, the maintenance of veterans’ graves through the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and the Sailors’ Memorial at the entrance of the Halifax harbour. For more information regarding the Government of Canada’s role in commemoration during the period, see *ibid.*, 61-67.

proposals to emerge called for the creation of a Memorial Hall. Announced in 1919, it was hoped that the Hall could be located in a central location in Ottawa and accommodate between 2000-4000 people.¹⁰ It was intended that the Memorial Hall would serve as a centre for social functions in the capital while, at the same time, honouring the soldiers of the Great War. It was quickly determined that this would not serve as a suitable means of commemoration and the plan never developed beyond its conceptual stage.

One plan that did develop to the stage of detailed designs was the memorial building proposed by the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF).¹¹ Owing much to the efforts of Lord Beaverbrook, the memorial building was similar in design to the Pantheon in Rome and was intended to house the country's war art that the CWMF had collected during the war. The building was also designed to fulfill an important commemorative function. In a published brochure on the plan, *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials*, the creators of the scheme explained that the building would serve as "a great war memorial in itself."¹² Despite the merits of the memorial building, Beaverbrook's vision was cast aside along with a number of other plans to build national commemorative memorials in the capital.¹³

¹⁰ David L.A. Gordon and Brian S. Osborne, "Constructing National Identity in Canada's Capital, 1900-2000: Confederation Square and the National War Memorial," *Journal of Historical Geography* 30, no. 4 (October 2004): 626.

¹¹ Accounts of the attempt to create the memorial building to house Canada's war art and why it was ultimately rejected can be found in Laura Brandon, "The Canadian War Memorial that Never Was," *Canadian Military History* 7, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 45-54; and R.F. Wodehouse, "Lord Beaverbrook's Plan for a Suitable Building to House the Canadian War Memorials," *Organization of Military Museums of Canada Journal* 7 (1978-79): 4-8.

¹² Brandon, "The Canadian," 48.

¹³ The story of Canada's war art is a long one that has received considerable attention from Canada's military and art historians. Regarding the plan to create a memorial building to house the artwork, it appears that the scheme never had the support of Mackenzie King and was unofficially rejected when he became Prime Minister. Instead, the war art became lumped together with ongoing efforts to develop the National Gallery of Canada.

By the early 1920s the Government of Canada came to the realization that a national monument was needed to commemorate Canadians' efforts during the Great War. As a result, the process to create the National War Memorial was put in motion. From its inception, the federal government played the leading role in the creation of the national commemorative war memorial. The guidelines for the project that were released in February 1925 suggest that the creators of the document saw the construction of the memorial not only as a necessary tribute to the soldiers who had participated in the Great War, but also as an important opportunity explicitly to describe the nature of Canada's First World War experience. Furthermore, the guidelines make it apparent that the authors of the text possessed a clear understanding of the purpose of the memorial that extended beyond simple commemoration of the country's war dead. As shall be seen, the ideas presented from the inception of the memorial until the selection of the winning entry were consistent: the monument could and must serve a broader purpose.

Throughout the period of the National War Memorial's creation, the government emphasised a number of features and characteristics that it wanted the memorial to possess. First and foremost, the memorial was intended to serve as a central commemoration with a symbolic role that was widely recognized by Canadians. While not downplaying the significance of local monuments, the National War Memorial was designed to be a commemoration that acknowledged the efforts of all Canada's overseas forces during the Great War. This emphasis on the memorial's larger purpose could be seen in almost every official publication and public address that referenced the monument. Indeed, even the decision to name it the National War Memorial suggested a wide and sweeping commemorative function. The creators of the memorial were also

insistent that the didactic messages conveyed by the monument be focused on commitment and sacrifice rather than the glorification of war. Moreover, there was a belief that the memorial could present a positive message to successive generations that emphasised the prosperous future for the country made possible by the sacrifices of Canada's armed forces. Two other staple features of the monument were the shared emphasis on the distinctly Canadian and broadly representational nature of the memorial. Those elements that distinguished Canada's contribution to war were highlighted and expanded upon to underline the service and sacrifice of Canadians. In addition, certain design elements were included and others omitted in order to entrench in the memorial features that were widely recognizable and relevant to all Canadians. References to particular geographic regions or demographic segments of society were to be avoided to underscore the national character of the memorial.

The notion that the memorial would be built with a larger purpose that went beyond commemoration of the dead was in no way unique to the National War Memorial project. In the context of public consumption, monuments can fulfill a variety of roles. At the most basic level, they often serve to beautify urban centers and function as focal points for public gatherings. Yet beyond these purposes, monuments play an important role in the creation of commemorative landscapes. Through the building of these public sites, nations are given the opportunity for the memorialization of the past and are able to present the values and beliefs of their culture. As a result, the very act of commemoration is inherently political.¹⁴ Whether intentional or not, all forms of commemoration serve as

¹⁴ The political quality of memorials is a subject that has received considerable attention from academics. For a brief discussion of this subject and a summary of a number of European works that have examined this trend, see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 93-94; a Canadian example of the inherently

pronouncements of who and what is worthy of memorialization. Furthermore, commemorations often present a singular, homogenous view of past events, exhibiting unity where divisions often exist.¹⁵

The government saw the National War Memorial as an opportunity to capture Canada's wartime experience. In doing so, the government deliberately chose to ignore the possibility of differing interpretations of the war. Addressing similar issues, some scholars have gone as far to as to suggest that memorials possess little intrinsic meaning without those messages imposed on them by both their creators and those who view them. James E. Young has argued that it is only when "they are invested with national soul and memory" that memorials become significant.¹⁶ A similar argument is made by James M. Mayo, who states that "war memorials derive meaning from the sentiments and utilitarian purposes we impose on them."¹⁷ It is through the processes of creation and consumption that meaning and significance are imparted to memorials. The National War Memorial is no different in this respect. Its creators implanted in the monument certain messages and themes that they believed would highlight the country's efforts in the Great War and enhance the primacy of *The Response* as Canada's national commemoration of the recent conflict.

The great lengths the government went to in order to ensure the successful promotion of these messages did not have the results that were originally envisaged. The monument was intended to present messages that went beyond the mere commemoration

political nature of commemoration can be found in historian H.V. Nelles study of the tercentenary celebrations in Quebec. See H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 13.

¹⁵ Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, 13.

¹⁶ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 2-3.

¹⁷ James M. Mayo, *War Memorial as Political Landscape: the American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 4.

of the dead. However, its creators never planned for the memorial to symbolize the service of all of Canada's armed forces in all of Canada's wars. After the unveiling of the memorial, events expanded the meaning of the memorial to encompass even more than had been planned for. As the country continued to become involved in overseas conflicts, the role and meaning of the National War Memorial was debated. Certain segments of Canadian society, most notably the Royal Canadian Legion, felt the need to create new memorials to honour the sacrifices of Canada's soldiers in the country's most recent wars. At the same time, others argued that *The Response* already fulfilled this commemorative function. The issue came to the forefront in February 1963, when the Government of Canada announced that a new National Shrine of Remembrance would be built in the capital to memorialize the service and sacrifice of the veterans and war dead of all wars. The ensuing debate and the eventual decision to not move forward with the project illustrated the extent to which peoples' understanding of the original messages imbedded in the memorial had changed. Between the unveiling of Canada's First World War memorial in 1939 and the announcement of a new memorial in 1963, the purpose of the National War Memorial had expanded beyond the original intentions of its creators.

The thesis draws on a variety of primary sources at Library and Archives Canada. Because both departments were involved in the project, much of the source material for the memorial is located in the fonds of the Department of Public Works (RG 11) and the Department of National Defence (RG 24). As a result of the connection between the creation of the memorial and redevelopment projects in the capital during the interwar years, information relating to the selection of the site for the National War Memorial is located in the files of the Federal District Commission, which have subsequently been

absorbed into the fonds of the National Capital Commission (RG 34). In addition to these records groups, the Department of External Affairs (RG 25) contains much of the correspondence relating to the project because of the international nature of the memorial's construction.¹⁸ The manuscript groups of those individuals most active in the project are also employed in this study. The personal papers of Prime Minister Mackenzie King were invaluable in developing a complete picture of the memorial's creation because his government oversaw the majority of the planning and construction phases of the monument. This research also draws upon Prime Minister R.B. Bennett's papers and those of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, both of whom were in power during crucial periods of the memorialization project. Supplementing this material are a number of newspaper articles and other publications. Chapter three in particular relies heavily on editorials and letters to the editor from a variety of newspapers and popular publications. Most of the critiques referenced in this section are contained in the Pearson Papers and, combined with the private and public responses from the Prime Minister, make powerful statements about the meaning and significance of the National War Memorial.¹⁹

This study also relies upon the considerable and growing literature on various aspects of commemoration and memorialization in the years following the First World War. In recent years a number of themes have developed in studies of commemoration, causing many historians to focus on the relationship between commemoration and such issues as nationalism, nation-building, national identity, and the formation of memory. Many of the questions asked in these studies relating to the political nature of

¹⁸ As shall be seen, the entirety of the bronze grouping on the memorial was created in the March family's studio in Farnborough, England. The correspondence regarding the alterations to the memorial and progress updates were often relayed through the Department of External Affairs.

¹⁹ Editorials and letters to editors taken from prime ministerial records are not separated in the bibliography.

commemoration and the way in which people perceive them were used to inform this research. Among the analyses employed most extensively in this study is Robert Shipley's *To Mark Our Place: a History of Canadian War Memorials*, which provides a useful survey of the building of war monuments throughout Canadian history. Focused more exclusively on the interwar period, Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* discusses the socially constructed nature of the memory of the war that was disseminated to Canadians through a variety of forms of commemoration. Although these works do not address the National War Memorial in detail, they are useful in identifying the many underlying messages that were imbedded in memorials, the tendency of these messages to present overtly political themes, and other trends in Canadian commemoration of the First World War.

The thesis contributes to the current body of knowledge by situating *The Response* in the existing scholarship on commemoration of war in Canada and abroad. While there have been several works that provide surveys of commemoration in the interwar years, a number of studies have also been conducted on specific memorials created during the period: examining their intended purpose; the process by which they were built; and their reception by the media, cultural commentators, veterans, and other elements of society. In Angus Calder's "The Scottish National War Memorial," the author examines how the creation of Scotland's First World War monument reflected the mood of Scottish nationalism in the interwar years.²⁰ The collection of essays in Geoffrey Hayes, Andrew Iarocci, and Mike Bechthold's *Vimy Ridge: a Canadian Reassessment*

²⁰ Angus Calder, "The Scottish National War Memorial," in *Memory and Memorials: the Commemorative Century*, eds. William Kidd and Brian Murdoch (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 61-74.

provides a re-examination of what the Canadian National Vimy Memorial has come to mean to Canadians since its unveiling in 1936.

Other studies have observed how memorials can serve as sites of resistance. Brian Osborne's "Constructing Landscapes of Power: The George-Étienne Cartier Monument" and Alan Gordon's "Lest We Forget: the Two Solitudes in War and Memory" have demonstrated how monuments in Quebec have often challenged pan-Canadian nationalist narratives, both when commemorating war and when memorializing individuals considered integral to these stories.²¹ A few academic studies have also been conducted on monuments in Ottawa and how they relate to the larger commemorative landscape that has been developed in the capital. Of note are those works related to Canada's national peacekeeping memorial that was unveiled in 1992. Both John Roberts and Paul Gough's examinations of this monument trace the development of commemoration in the capital in order to explain how the peacekeeping monument came about, and why it was perceived as necessary in light of existing national commemoration.²² While this thesis is principally based on primary source material, these, and other secondary works that examine various commemorations, are employed throughout this study to support the analysis and to draw connections between *The Response* and other commemorative initiatives.

²¹ Brian Osborne, "Constructing Landscapes of Power: The *George-Étienne Cartier Monument*," *Journal of Historical Geography* 24, no. 4 (October 1998): 431-458; and Alan Gordon, "Lest We Forget: the Two Solitudes in War and Memory," in *Canadas of the Mind: the Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 159-173.

²² John M. Roberts, "Nation-Building and Monumentalization in the Contemporary Capital: the Case of Ottawa-Hull, with Particular Reference to the Peacekeeping Monument and the Canadian Tribute to Human Rights" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 1999); and Paul Gough, "Peacekeeping, Peace, Memory: Reflections on the Peacekeeping Monument in Ottawa," *Canadian Military History* 11, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 65-74.

Despite the abundance of research on commemoration and memorialization, there is relatively little work that directly addresses the National War Memorial project. Most scholars only briefly discuss the origins of the monument and very rarely draw upon primary source material. Of those few studies that have examined *The Response* in some detail, the tendency has been towards framing the monument as it relates to certain themes: the history of Remembrance Day ceremonies; the connection between memory and commemoration; the memorial's place among twentieth century redevelopment plans for the capital; and its relation to the formation of national identity.²³ The most detailed account of the memorial is Susan Phillips-Desroches' Master's thesis, written for the Canadian Studies department of Carleton University, and titled "Canada's National War Memorial: Reflection of the Past or Liberal Dream?"²⁴ Phillips-Desroches predicates her argument on the notion that Mackenzie King wanted "the monument to be an emissary of a myth of nationhood premised upon Canadian unity and the power of history."²⁵

However, her examination of the memorial, like all other studies conducted on the

²³ Natascha Morrison, "Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards: Remembrance Day in Canada, 1918-2008," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 2010); Stephanie Martell Brownness, "Site, Space, and Memory: the Construction of Meaning in Commemorative Public Space" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 2010); David L.A. Gordon, "From Noblesse Oblige to Nationalism: Elite Involvement in Planning Canada's Capital," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no.1 (November 2001): 3-34; and Gordon and Osborne, "Constructing National Identity," 618-642.

²⁴ Susan Phillips-Desroches, "Canada's National War Memorial: Reflection of the Past or Liberal Dream?" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 2002).

²⁵ Phillips-Desroches' thesis is composed of three chapters: the first examines the trends in commemoration in Canada in the years preceding the building of the National War Memorial; the second briefly outlines the creation of the memorial; and the third attempts to attribute the construction of the memorial to an effort by W.L.M. King to establish a Canada that was unified and independent of Britain. While the section regarding the creation of the memorial presents a general summary of the process through which the monument was built, there are significant gaps in both the level of her research and her account of the memorial. The principal problem with her thesis, however, is her inability to connect her brief discussion of the messages the monument sought to convey with her lengthy analysis of the Prime Minister's role. She argues that the war memorial was the personal project of King, who used it as a means of crafting a foundational myth of nationhood based on the country's accomplishments during the war. However, she fails to fulfill her aims and is unable to demonstrate that King personally carried these ideas forward in the monument's creation. Indeed, her conclusions are inconsistent with the evidence she presents and she is unclear which government officials were directly involved in the creation of the memorial. For the quote used in the text above, see *ibid.*, 2.

monument, does not provide a complete account of its origins, creation, and evolution, nor does she address the post Second World War debate over its evolving meaning. Indeed, research on the 1960s efforts to create the National Shrine of Remembrance, including its relation to the meaning of the National War Memorial, is virtually nonexistent.

The aim of this study is systematically to determine and interrogate the process by which the monument was conceived, created, and remade. From the first discussion of the project, through the selection of March's design, to the making and unveiling of the memorial, and the debate of the early 1960s regarding the commemorative purpose of the monument, this research provides a comprehensive examination of the National War Memorial. To accomplish this task, this study is divided into three equally significant periods in the development and elaboration of the monument: the origins and selection of *The Response*; the making of the memorial; and the adaption of the memorial's meaning in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Chapter one focuses on the period between the initial announcement of the plan in 1923 through to the selection of the winning design in early 1926. Emphasis in this section is given to determining those ideals that the creators of the monument wanted included in the memorial and what they believed it should represent. The official competition guidelines for the project served as an explicit declaration of the memorial's larger commemorative purpose. Having addressed these issues, this chapter then moves on to examine the competition that was held in 1925 to locate a design appropriate for the commemoration of Canada's First World War armed forces. Each of the seven finalists' designs is discussed and importance is placed on determining why *The Response* was

chosen over the other entries. The overarching theme of the first chapter is to establish what the monument's creators believed it should describe, symbolize, and capture, and how *The Response* was understood to have met these aspirations.

The second chapter addresses the making of the memorial between 1926 and 1939. Of particular importance in this chapter are the many alterations made to the original design in an effort to highlight those features connected with the broader purpose of the memorial. Between 1926 and 1933, many changes were made to the monument. However, the fundamental design of the monument was never significantly affected. Instead, a number of minor alterations were made to enhance the themes present in the memorial. The chapter then describes the debates surrounding the site for the memorial and why it was chosen over other possible locations. While the discussions about the monument's location became entwined with the larger development plans for the capital during the period, the National War Memorial project cannot be understood outside of the context of these debates. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the unveiling of the memorial in May 1939 by King George VI and the manner in which his presence at the event reaffirmed many of the values and ideals expressed during the making of the memorial. An important theme of this chapter is to demonstrate the continuity over time of the messages the creators wanted the memorial to represent. The government had an idea from the outset of what the memorial would be: it would carry a unifying national message. As it was being built, these ideas were elaborated, and the creators of the monument articulated a message of a uniquely Canadian and broadly representational memorial. These messages permeated nearly all aspects of the project and became a defining feature in the making of the memorial.

The subject of the third chapter is the evolution of the purpose of the memorial over the years following its unveiling in 1939. The chapter begins by discussing the initial plans to create an additional memorial in honour of Canada's soldiers of the Second World War and the Korean War. The chapter then examines the government's decision to announce plans for a National Shrine of Remembrance in 1963. Following this announcement, a year long debate took place that highlighted the differences in understandings of the meaning of *The Response*. From these discussions, it became apparent that not all Canadians believed another memorial was necessary. The chapter concentrates on the purpose the government assigned to this new memorial, the debate that ensued regarding the need for a second national commemorative war monument, and the way in which the decision to abandon the plan marked a recognition on the part of the government that the National War Memorial represented those who served in all of Canada's conflicts. The meaning of the National War Memorial was questioned after the Second World War, but it was challenged unsuccessfully. *The Response* had become Canadians' answer to all of their wars.

CHAPTER ONE – ‘The Spirit of the Nation’: Finding a Representation of Canada’s Great War Experience

The first reference to the need for a national monument came from wartime Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden, who in September 1915 stated “It is my desire and intention that some splendid monument shall be erected in this country, perhaps in the capital of the Dominion, which will commemorate the men who responded so splendidly to the call of duty.”¹ However, aside from a few passing references in Parliament, little action was taken towards the construction of a national memorial in the years immediately following the First World War. One of the earliest indications that plans for a monument were in development can be seen in a brief newspaper article from the *Ottawa Citizen* on December 12, 1922. The article reported that the government planned to announce in the upcoming session of parliament its intention to erect a National Soldiers’ Monument commemorating the service of Canadians who fought in the Great War.² Although it was unclear what form the monument would take and where it would be located, the article noted that “It is understood that the monument should be symbolic in character and should be placed in the most central and commanding position in the capital.”³ The *Citizen* went on to speculate that, while something along the lines of the Nelson monument in Trafalgar Square might be appropriate, the exact details of the memorial were yet to be decided.

During the closing day of the next session of parliament, the government moved forward with its plan and requested an appropriation for a national monument to be

¹ I have been unable to locate the precise location of where Borden made this statement. However, it is included within a brief summary of the National War Memorial that was compiled by the Historical Section of the Department of National Defence. LAC, RG 24, vol. 1752, “The National War Memorial,” 1943, 2.

² “National Soldiers’ Monument Planned,” *Ottawa Citizen*, December 19, 1922.

³ *Ibid.*

constructed in Ottawa. On March 9, 1923 James Horace King, Minister of Public Works, informed the House of Commons that a recently established committee of Cabinet was requesting that Parliament grant \$10,000 for preliminary planning for a national monument on Connaught Place, later to become known as Confederation Square.⁴ While the precise location of the planned memorial had been identified, the Minister acknowledged that it was still unclear what form this new memorial would take. Several Members of Parliament were sceptical of the project and opposed the appropriation. The first to question the initiative was J.S. Woodsworth, the Independent Labour Party representative for the riding of Winnipeg North, who argued that government funds should not be wasted while a number of veterans were still facing unemployment and other problems associated with post-war reintegration into civilian life. In addition to Woodsworth's moral objection, many opposed the project because of concerns about cost. Progressive Party members Edward Garland and Robert Hoey questioned if it was wise to grant \$10,000 to the project at the time when it was unclear how much the total cost of the monument would be. In addition, Murray MacLaren of the Conservative party expressed concern about the ambiguity surrounding the proposal. Although he was careful to state that he supported the idea of commemorating Canada's war effort, MacLaren argued that a memorial should only be created when there was a clear understanding of its purpose and a broad outline of the form this commemoration would take. The Minister of Public Works was genuinely unprepared to answer the questions

⁴ On May 31, 1922 a Cabinet committee was established in response to the many monuments that were being erected in commemoration of the First World War. The purpose of the committee was to oversee the style, location, and construction of memorials across the country. Because of their limited powers of oversight, the committee mainly dealt with monuments, such as the National War Memorial, that were created by the federal government. See LAC, MG 26, J4, vol.199, C-4277, "Minute of a Meeting of the Committee of the Privy Council," May 31, 1922. For the above and subsequent references to the first Parliamentary discussions of the National War Memorial, see Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Second Session—Fourteenth Parliament, vol. 155 (March 9, 1923), 1020-1021.

relating to the cost of the project and could only say that the appropriation would be used to organize a competition to select an appropriate design. The concerns about the project and the absence from the House of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King resulted in the decision to let the item stand for later debate.⁵

When the issue returned to the House of Commons, the government was prepared to reveal what it believed to be the purpose of the memorial. On May 11, 1923 the Minister of Public Works again raised the issue.⁶ Citing the considerable amount already spent on monuments dedicated to Canadian soldiers in Europe, Minister King argued that it was only fitting that a small sum be allocated to explore the possibility of constructing a similar memorial in the capital. In response to King's initial remarks, MacLaren again questioned the purpose of the project. He pointed to the existence of an inscription on the central pillar of the Parliament buildings that acknowledged the service and valour of those Canadians who fought overseas, and asked how this memorial failed to fulfil the purpose of the proposed national monument.⁷ In an effort to address the concerns that MacLaren and others had raised, the Prime Minister explained the rationale behind the government's desire to erect a new monument:

In every country in the world the spirit of the nation has found some expression in regard to great events in the form of permanent monuments if the occasions have been sufficiently worthy of such recognition from the national point of view. The government felt that a monument should be erected in the capital of Canada

⁵ It is unclear why the Prime Minister was not present for the announcement of the project. In his diary he wrote that he had been "suffering somewhat from lack of exercise and depression" for the past few days. However, he made no reference to his absence from the House. See WLMK Diary, March 9, 1923.

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, all information pertaining to the May 11, 1923 discussion of the NWM comes from Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Second Session—Fourteenth Parliament, vol. 157 (May 11, 1923), 2685-2690.

⁷ When the Canadian Houses of Parliament were rebuilt following the fire that destroyed the Centre Block in February 1916, commemorative elements were incorporated into the structure including the Peace Tower, the Book of Remembrance, and the central pillar referred to by MacLaren. Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain, and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony and Remembrance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 81.

expressive of the feelings of the Canadian people as a whole to the memory of those who had participated in the Great War and had lost their lives in the service of humanity.⁸

He went on to argue that, while the inscription in the Parliament buildings commemorated Canada's involvement in the war, the pillar also contained references to Confederation and other events that are "more or less symbolical of our relations with the British Empire as a whole."⁹ According to Mackenzie King, this inscription was never intended to serve as a national war memorial. The memorial his government now proposed was "intended to be a national monument in the national capital" and that "there is, as of yet, no monument of a national character in the capital of the Dominion."¹⁰ For these reasons, King contended that Parliament should grant the government an appropriation to move forward with the initial phase of the project, to hold a competition and select a winning design. Once the form of the monument had been decided upon, the government would return to the House in order to gain its support for the initiative.

While a few concerns were raised in this session about the uncertainty of the costs associated with the project, the main opposition came from those Members of Parliament who questioned the timing of the memorial. In response to Mackenzie King's declaration of the memorial's intent, Woodsworth expanded upon the critique that he had mounted in the previous session of Parliament. Woodsworth's argument was that memorialization should not be a priority at a time when the growing national debt was preventing the government from providing essential services to many Canadians. Citing the government's recent announcement that an additional \$50,000,000 would be added to the

⁸ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Second Session—Fourteenth Parliament, vol. 157 (May 11, 1923), 2685-2686.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

national debt, he stated that the government should avoid allocating any funds to the memorial project that could otherwise be spent on urgently needed social programs. While Woodsworth was forthright in his opposition to the creation of a memorial, he was very clear in explaining that he supported Canadian veterans. He argued that it was unacceptable that “this government cannot see its way to provide anything for the unemployed [while] there are thousands of men who spent several years overseas who are today suffering and whose families are suffering.”¹¹ Continuing his critique of the initiative, Woodsworth read aloud a letter that he had recently received from a woman in his constituency whose family was in economic strife:

May I suggest that instead of spending money on the fallen, they spend the money for the clothing, feeding and sheltering of the men who had the great misfortune to return to Canada with their lives. It is no fault of theirs if they are not among the so-called “glorious dead.” Had these men returned they would be in the same category as their living comrades—in the bread line... Canada has already forgotten those men who served Canada for the profiteer, and saved poverty and misery for themselves.¹²

Although Woodsworth opposed this woman’s later claim that memorials to the dead served little purpose, he agreed with many of the ideas that were plainly stated in the letter. Until further provisions could be provided for the living, no great expenditures should be made for the dead.

Woodsworth ended with a discussion of the memorial’s purpose. He believed that when the time came for a monument to be built there should be the utmost care given to determining the character of the memorial and the messages it conveyed. In designing any memorial the government “must be very careful lest in any sense [whatsoever] we

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² While Woodsworth did not specifically identify who this individual was, he explained that her husband was unable to find a job and that she had been forced to send her children away so that she could work and try to earn enough income to survive. *Ibid.*, 2687.

glorify war or militarism.”¹³ For Woodsworth, it was pointless to commemorate the conflict if there was not some reference to the futility of war. While acknowledging that the proposed monument might possess some form of tribute to the fallen soldiers, the principal message conveyed should be that war is a “miserable failure.”¹⁴

King responded by stating that the government had no desire to use the memorial as a glorification of war. Instead, the Prime Minister explained that the government sought to commemorate “the greatest patriotism and the greatest sacrifice which the country has ever known.”¹⁵ Referring to the old proverb that men cannot live by bread alone, he stated that “If it is a choice between living without bread and living without a spirit that is ready for sacrifice, I think the majority of men would prefer the spirit of sacrifice to bread.”¹⁶ In addition to Woodsworth’s concerns over the commemorative purpose of the memorial, King objected to the former’s reliance on labour interests to make his case. The Prime Minister stated that he utterly opposed any attempt to use the needs of labour to argue that “the government should not seek to perpetuate in the minds of our own and future generations in this country the greatest service, the greatest sacrifice ever rendered by the nation in a cause which was the greatest the world has known in the history of human freedom.”¹⁷ The underlying idea that King was presenting was that everything could not be measured by its utility. Some things in this world, he argued, transcended the material needs of individuals. For the Prime Minister, a national monument dedicated to the heroism and self-sacrifice that was exhibited by Canadians during the First World War could fulfill a broad societal imperative.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2687-2688.

Aside from acknowledging Woodsworth's suggestion that the memorial should not serve as a glorification of war, King failed to address the concerns raised against the project in any meaningful way. Instead, he spent the remainder of his discussion on the subject implying that those who questioned the timing of the project were unpatriotic and unappreciative of the sacrifices of Canada's armed forces. By conflating discussions over the timing of the memorial with whether or not there was a need to memorialize the dead, King forced those who had questioned the project to defend themselves from appearing ungrateful to those who had sacrificed themselves during the war.¹⁸ As a result, he was able to avoid answering any of the questions that emerged regarding the timing of the memorial and the costs associated with the project. Having convinced Parliament to approve the project, King wrote in his diary "I am glad to have had to do with originating & getting through this memorial."¹⁹

With the granting of an appropriation of \$10,000 for the monument, work began to move the project forward and to find a design that captured the essence of Canada's wartime sacrifice. Among the issues that had to be addressed were how the competition would be structured, those who could submit entries, the manner in which the various submissions would be judged, and, perhaps most significant, the determination of what the memorial was explicitly intended to represent. The culmination of this first phase of the competition was the publication of the official competition guidelines, which outlined all aspects of the competition phase of the memorial's creation. Despite the enthusiasm quickly to resolve these issues, it took almost two years to determine all the details required to complete this phase of the National War Memorial project.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2687-2689.

¹⁹ WLMK Diary, May 11, 1923.

In determining the many components of the overall structure of the competition, the government relied on the examples of previous commemorative efforts as well as the expertise of people who had been involved in similar projects. While Mackenzie King remained greatly involved in the process because of his stated “special interest in this matter,” other figures were brought into the fold.²⁰ The Deputy Minister of Public Works, J.B. Hunter, became regularly involved in discussions pertaining to the memorial because of his experience with a number of commemorative projects in Canada. In addition, Eric Brown was regularly consulted for his expertise gained as director of the National Gallery of Canada and his membership on the Canadian War Artists Advisory Committee. The final figure of note was Colonel H.C. Osborne, who served as the Honorary Secretary of the Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission (CBMC), which had been formed in 1920 to oversee the creation of war memorials in Europe dedicated to Canadian soldiers.²¹ Through his time with the CBMC, Osborne had gained considerable experience in creating competition guidelines for memorials built in honour of Canadian soldiers who fought and died overseas. The recommendations of Brown and Osborne were particularly significant during this phase of the monument’s creation. In February 1924 King informed Deputy Minister Hunter that he wanted to express his great appreciation to Brown and Osborne for their assistance in the drafting of a variety of components of the competition guidelines. In a private letter to Hunter, King stated that he believed that these two individuals “had considerable experience in, and have special

²⁰ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, WLMK to J.B. Hunter, February 15, 1924.

²¹ The CBMC was established on September 2, 1920 by an Order-in-Council to determine an appropriate way in which to commemorate Canadian battles in Belgium and France during the First World War. The commission eventually decided upon the creation of eight monuments at Vimy, Bourlon Wood, Le Quesnel, Dury, and Courcellette in France, as well as St. Julien, Hill 62, and Passchendaele in Belgium. For a copy of the resolution that created the CBMC, explaining their mandate, and a brief summary of its work, see LAC, MG 26, J4, vol. 227, C-4288, “Memorandum re. Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission Supplied by Department of National Defence,” n.d.

qualifications for, arranging competitions of this kind.”²² On a number of occasions, King requested their advice in determining the specific regulations relating to such issues as who should have the final say in selecting the winning design, how to ensure the largest number of entries, and who should be allowed to enter designs in the competition. With the expertise offered by these figures, the government was able to draw on the lessons learned through other commemorative initiatives to ensure that no details were overlooked that might later hinder the completion of the memorial.

One of the first issues to be addressed in this phase of the memorial’s creation was who would be permitted to submit designs in the competition. Based on the guidelines from previous monuments built by the CBMC, it initially appeared that the competition to design a national war memorial would be limited to Canadian artists. However, in an apparently unilateral decision, Mackenzie King informed Hunter on July 18, 1923 that he believed the competition should be more broadly inclusive than originally suggested.²³ The Prime Minister proposed that the competition be extended to include citizens of other countries to ensure the highest caliber of entries possible. There were still limitations placed on who could submit designs. King argued that designs entered in the competition should be restricted to British subjects or subjects of countries that were allied with the British Empire during the Great War.²⁴ By doing so, he believed that more entries of a higher quality would be submitted while, at the same time, the government would avoid any controversy that could arise from the selection of a design

²² LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, WLMK to Hunter, February 15, 1924.

²³ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, WLMK to Hunter, July 18, 1923.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

created by a citizen of a First World War enemy country.²⁵ In the end, King's decision to allow citizens of other allied nations to enter the competition proved important. The winning design was created by a British artist and later transported to Canada, a trend neither uncommon nor controversial during the period.²⁶

The overall structure of the competition was another issue that was quickly addressed in the period following the announcement of the memorial. In a letter to Hunter on December 4, 1924, Osborne informed the Deputy Minister that he and Brown were in favour of a two stage competition for selecting a winning design.²⁷ This format required that artists first submit a written description of the monument, explaining its various design features and its symbolic meaning. Based on these written descriptions, the assessors would select a handful of entries to move forward to the second phase of the competition. In this final round, scale models would be produced by the selected design teams. By combining the explanations provided in the written works with the artistic merit presented in the second phase, the assessors would be able to choose the design that

²⁵ Although there were many countries that were neither associated with the Triple Entente nor the Central Powers, the decision to limit the competition to citizens of the British Empire and its allies during the war appears to have been based on a general understanding that the memorial should not be designed by a citizen of a former enemy state. As for concerns over the possibility of having the memorial designed by a citizen of a former enemy country, this issue was not without precedent. Earlier in 1924 a controversy erupted in Winnipeg after a committee recommended that a monument co-designed by German born sculptor Emmanuel Hahn be selected as the winning entry in the city's competition to erect a memorial of the First World War. Several community and veterans' organizations opposed a memorial designed by a German and the project was cancelled. It would be another three years before a second competition was held to find a suitable monument for the city. For more information on this and other controversies surrounding the creation of memorials during the period, see Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 206.

²⁶ There is no indication that the selection of a British artist's design caused any controversy. This is likely because, as Robert Shipley notes, it was commonplace for memorials to be built elsewhere and shipped to Canada at the time. Curiously, however, Stephanie Martell Brownness states that there was "great concern over the choice of an English sculptor rather than one Canadian-born." She does not elaborate on this point, nor does she provide any evidence to support her claims. See Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place: a History of Canadian War Memorials* (Toronto: NC Press, 1987), 126; and Stephanie Martell Brownness, "Site, Space, and Memory: the Construction of Meaning in Commemorative Public Space" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 2010), 37.

²⁷ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, H.C. Osborne to Hunter, December 4, 1924.

best fulfilled the requirements outlined in the competition guidelines. In advocating for a competition of this format, Osborne drew upon his time with the CBMC.²⁸ He explained that the competition guidelines for selecting eight Canadian monuments to be erected in Europe had employed this two stage format, which allowed for the maximum number of entries to be judged in a reasonable period of time.²⁹ According to Osborne, this format worked very well for the CBMC and would do the same for the selection of a national monument in Ottawa.³⁰ Based on these recommendations, it was decided that the upcoming competition would utilize this two stage format.

While progress was quickly made on a number of components of the competition guidelines, discussions of who would have the final say in selecting the winning entry lasted throughout 1924. From the outset, Mackenzie King believed that final judgement should be given to the Cabinet.³¹ He was, however, not opposed to the appointment of provisional assessors so long as the decision did not rest with any one individual and Cabinet was involved in selecting the winning design. As was typically the case during this period of the monument's planning, the Prime Minister conferred with Brown and Osborne to hear their position on the matter. On December 16, 1924 the two advisors presented Hunter with what they believed would be the best way to judge the

²⁸ In a letter to Hunter on December 10, 1924, Osborne provided a broad overview of the two stage competition structure used by the CBMC throughout 1920 and 1921. From the letter, it is apparent that Hunter had requested information about the competitions held by the CBMC and how they compared to the single stage competition structure used by the Australian government in the selection of their National War Memorial. As was often the case during this phase of the memorial's creation, the government relied heavily on the lessons learned from previous commemorative efforts, both domestically and internationally. See *ibid.*

²⁹ LAC, RG 25, vol. 335, "Conditions of Competition in Design for Eight Memorial Monuments to be Erected in France and Belgium," December 20, 1920.

³⁰ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Osborne to Hunter, December 4, 1924.

³¹ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, WLMK to Hunter, February 15, 1924.

competition.³² Brown and Osborne counselled that it would be a mistake to give Cabinet full responsibility in deciding the winning entry, as some individuals involved in the project had suggested.³³ Instead they argued that the decision should rest with the assessors and that Cabinet should simply reserve the right to accept or reject the winning design based on its adherence to the purpose of the memorial as set out in the competition guidelines.³⁴ In the end, the government decided to move ahead with the recommendations made by Brown and Osborne, which they believed provided a balance between independent adjudication and government control over the final form of the memorial.

As had been the practice with the CBMC, it was decided that the national war memorial competition would be judged by a three member panel with people drawn from the artistic and architectural community.³⁵ In selecting these individuals the government requested that the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts nominate two assessors with the experience and expertise necessary to judge the competition.³⁶ Shortly after these requests were sent, the organizations nominated Henry Sproatt from the National Sculptural Society of New York and Toronto based architect Herman A. MacNeil respectively. In addition, the government independently appointed the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery

³² LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Osborne to Hunter, December 16, 1924.

³³ The Chief Architect of the Department of Public Works, R.C. Wright, had recommended that the Cabinet be solely responsible for selecting the winning entry. See *ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ The assessors for the CBMC included Professor Charles H. Reilly from the architectural department of Liverpool University, the notable French architect Paul Cret who designed the American national monument in France, and Frank Darling from the Royal Canadian Architectural Institute. See Jacqueline Hucker, "After the Agony in Stony Places: the Meaning and Significance of the Vimy Monument," in *Vimy Ridge: a Canadian Reassessment*, ed. Geoffrey Hayes, Andrew Iarocci, and Mike Bechthold (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 289.

³⁶ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Hunter to Henry Sproatt, February 3, 1925.

of Canada, Dr. F.J. Shepherd. In explaining the reasoning behind the selection of these individuals for the Board of Assessors, Hunter stated that Shepherd would serve as the representative of the National Gallery, which they believed should have a say in the matter.³⁷ The other two men would serve as “technical assessors,” with Sproatt representing sculpting and MacNeil selected for his knowledge of architecture.³⁸ In the letters Hunter sent out informing these individuals of their selection, he explained that the government would compensate them for the various transportation and accommodation expenses associated with judging the competition in Ottawa. However, he informed them that their appointments were entirely honorary.³⁹

The selection of the assessors marked the completion of the competition guidelines and, on February 12, 1925, the government officially published them under the title *Conditions of Open Competition for the Selection of a Design for A National Commemorative War Monument To be Erected in the City of Ottawa, Canada*.⁴⁰ The document was principally drafted by Osborne and Brown. However, it is apparent that Hunter, Mackenzie King, and the Secretary of Public Works, S.E. O’Brien, also made significant contributions.⁴¹ Printed in both French and English, this twenty-five page

³⁷ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Hunter to F.J. Shepherd, February 7, 1925.

³⁸ The reference to the need for “technical assessors” was stated in *ibid*; however, the suggestion that the Board of Assessors include experts in the fields of architecture and sculpture came from Brown and Osborne. See LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Osborne to Hunter, December 4, 1924.

³⁹ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Hunter to Sproatt, February 3, 1925; LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Hunter to Herman A. MacNeil, February 3, 1925; and LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Hunter to Shepherd, February 7, 1925.

⁴⁰ LAC, RG 25, vol. 337, *Conditions of Open Competition for the Selection of a Design for A National Commemorative War Monument To be Erected in the City of Ottawa, Canada*, February 12, 1925.

⁴¹ While it is likely that several individuals played a role in drafting the document, I have been unable to locate all those individuals involved in the creation of the *Conditions of Open Competition*. It is, however, apparent that Brown and Osborne were the lead authors of the document. It is equally apparent, based on correspondence in the months leading up to the official release of the document, that King and Hunter were also involved in editing drafts of the guidelines. O’Brien is the only individual whose name is present on the competition guidelines, but I have been unable to find any reference to his involvement in the project prior to this instance. For examples of the role these individuals played in the creation of this document, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, King to Hunter, February 15, 1924; LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Osborne to Hunter,

document included several sections in which the government clearly stated the various requirements and conditions that were necessary for entries submitted to the competition. In addition to eligibility to submit designs, the overall structure of the competition, and identification of the Board of Assessors, the guidelines explained all the basic requirements for entries, and noted the \$100,000 budget and the planned monument's location at Connaught Place. The guidelines also contained the first fully developed declaration of what the memorial was intended to represent. In doing so, the guidelines drew heavily from the explanation of the memorial's purpose that King provided to the House of Commons on May 11, 1923. Indeed, some of the sections that deal explicitly with the symbolic meaning of the memorial were taken verbatim from the Prime Minister's speech.⁴² However, the guidelines expanded on these ideas and clearly stated what the Government of Canada wanted the memorial to represent.

In describing the overall purpose of the monument, the guidelines stated, "The Government feels that a monument should be erected in the Capital of Canada, expressive of the feelings of the Canadian people as a whole, to the memory of those who participated in the Great War and lost their lives in the service of humanity."⁴³ Through this statement, the authors asserted that the monument was to commemorate the service of those individuals who fought, were wounded, and died in the conflict. However, there was also the implicit suggestion that all Canadians shared a similar feeling towards the war and the role that they played in it. By stating that the memorial would be expressive

December 4, 1924; LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Osborne to Hunter, December 16, 1924; and LAC, RG 25, vol. 337, *Conditions of Open Competition*, 3.

⁴² In particular, sections 2 and 3 contain multiple sentences that are identical to King's speech in the House of Commons. For a comparison, see *ibid.*, 4; and Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Second Session—Fourteenth Parliament, vol. 157 (May 11, 1923), 2685-2686.

⁴³ This declaration of the government's intention to build a memorial was originally made by Prime Minister King when first addressing Parliament on the issue. It was later reproduced in the competition guidelines. See *ibid.*; and LAC, RG 25, vol. 337, *Conditions of Open Competition*, 4.

of the will of all Canadians, the guidelines stipulated that the new monument would reflect a broad, national sentiment that was representative of the country's shared view of the conflict. In another overt declaration of the memorial's purpose, the document stated:

It is the spirit of heroism, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the spirit of all that is noble and great that was exemplified in the lives of those sacrificed in the Great War, and the services rendered by the men and women who went Overseas; it is that vision which the government wishes to keep alive in erecting a monument of this kind.⁴⁴

This section further emphasised the government's desire to commemorate the heroic actions and sacrifices of those men and women who served overseas and, particularly, those who lost their lives during the war. Curiously, however, there was no mention of those soldiers who did not participate in overseas service. While the memorial was to be broadly representational, this was not without limitations. The guidelines suggested it was only dedicated to those individuals who were deployed abroad and directly involved in the conflict. From these statements of the memorial's purpose, it is evident that the authors of the document had a clear conception of what the memorial was to represent from the outset of the competition.

While the guidelines stated that the memorial was to commemorate the country's contribution to the Great War, it also suggested that the memorial could serve as an inspiration to future generations. Perhaps responding to the earlier concerns raised by individuals such as Woodsworth, a section of the *Conditions of Open Competition* asserted that "It is not the intention that this monument should glorify war or suggest the arrogance of a conqueror."⁴⁵ In addition, the document stated that "While the spirit of victory is essential it should be expressed so as to not only immortalize Canada's

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

defenders, but convey a feeling of gratitude that out of this great conflict a new hope has sprung for future prosperity under peaceful conditions.”⁴⁶ It is therefore clear that those individuals responsible for creating the guidelines felt that the monument could fulfill a symbolic purpose that went beyond the events that occurred during the Great War. Instead of creating a memorial that would glorify the war or the country’s role in defeating its opponents, the guidelines called for a monument that pointed to the opportunity that a great sacrifice had presented to the nation. While not neglecting the importance of the role Canadian’s played in the conflict, the guidelines stipulated that the memorial should also look to the future as a positive and prosperous time for the country.

The *Conditions of Open Competition’s* attention to explaining the eligibility of artists to enter the competition helps to understand why the guidelines went into such detail in explaining the purpose of the memorial. Section six of the guidelines stated that the competition was open to all British subjects living in the British Empire and abroad, as well as citizens of the allied countries during the war.⁴⁷ At the most basic level, this stipulation was likely included because of the potential controversy associated with having the new memorial created by a citizen of an enemy nation during the war. Yet this section also helps to explain the attention given to identifying the commemorative purpose of the memorial in earlier sections of the guidelines. Because the competition was open to many artists working and living abroad, it was essential explicitly to state the nature of the Canadian war experience and the important messages that the monument must convey to Canadians. In essence, the authors of the document were tasked with depicting the nation to both Canadians and foreigners alike. The authors of the guidelines

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

thus went out of their way to state what the memorial was intended to represent in order to underline the national significance of the war for any potential applicants. Though there was no rigid description of the form that the authors felt that the memorial should take, the emphasis that was placed on explaining the messages the monument must convey suggested that the framers of the document had strong ideas about what they wanted the memorial to symbolise.

The issues not addressed in the *Conditions of Open Competition* also informed the broader messages presented in the document. What the authors chose to leave out of the document was as informative as what is included. The most notable omission was the lack of discussion of the role that Canada played in relation to the British Empire's war effort. The only passing reference to the Empire in the document was in the section on the eligibility of artists to submit entries in the competition. Throughout the remainder of the document, the Canadian war experience was presented as separate from those of other allied nations. Rather than speaking of the Empire and its allies' victory in the war, the document focused purely on Canada and the way in which the monument should present the Great War's symbolic importance to the nation. Although Canadians' sacrifice "in the service of humanity" is identified, attention is directed towards "Canada's defenders" and the opportunities that the nation's actions in the war presented the country in the years that followed.⁴⁸ The principal reason for this omission is undoubtedly related to the national significance that the authors of the guidelines attached to the memorial. Since the creators of the document saw the memorial as an opportunity to use the Canadian war experience as a productive inspiration for future generations, it follows that the guidelines

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

should focus on Canada's individual accomplishments on the international stage rather than its contribution to the war as part of the broader Empire.

In the months after the release of the *Conditions of Open Competition*, the government went about publicizing the competition to ensure the largest number of entries possible. The advertisement that was released for the competition explained the basic organization of the process, restrictions on eligibility, the maximum allowable cost of the memorial, and its proposed location.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the advertisement stated that entries to the competition must be submitted to the Hunter Building of the Department of Public Works in Ottawa no later than June 11, 1925, four months after the publication of the guidelines. The advertisement did not, however, provide an explanation of the monument's commemorative purpose. The only indication of the intended function of the memorial was the "National Commemorative War Monument" title that was applied to it.⁵⁰ Instead, competitors were instructed to contact Public Works in order to receive a complete copy of the *Conditions of Open Competition* before designing an entry.

In total, the government ran advertisements in thirty-seven newspapers and other publications in Canada. The breadth of coverage for the advertisements ran across the country and targeted nearly every major Canadian city: *Le Droit* (Ottawa), *Citizen* (Ottawa), *Courier Federal* (Ottawa), *Danebrog* (Ottawa), *Canada Gazette* (Ottawa), *Globe* (Toronto), *Star* (Toronto), *Canadian Engineer* (Toronto), *Contract Record* (Toronto), *Advertiser* (London), *Le Spectateur* (Hull), *Le Canada* (Montreal), *Herald* (Montreal), *Jewish Eagle* (Montreal), *Le Bulletin* (Montreal), *L'Autorite* (Montreal), *Le Soleil* (Quebec), *L'Evenement* (Quebec), *Telegraph* (Quebec), *Le Bulletin de la Ferme*

⁴⁹ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "Proposed Advertisement for Competitive Designs to Sculptors, Architects and Artists," n.d.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

(Quebec), *Chronicle* (Trois-Rivieres), *Le Flambeau* (Trois-Rivieres), *Le Nouvelliste* (Trois-Rivieres), *Acadian Recorder* (Halifax), *Chronicle* (Halifax), *Globe* (St. John), *Times* (St. John), *Telegraph-Journal* (St. John), *Patriot* (Charlottetown), *Free Press* (Winnipeg), *Leader* (Regina), *Herald* (Calgary), *Bulletin* (Edmonton), *Star* (Vancouver), *Province* (Vancouver), *Sun* (Vancouver), and the *Times* (Victoria).⁵¹ Supplementing those that ran across the country, the same advertisements were also placed in five newspapers and journals in London, England, one newspaper in Paris, and one newspaper in Brussels.⁵² With a total of forty-four different publications, each running the advertisements on three separate occasions, the government widely publicized the competition.⁵³

The effectiveness of the advertisement campaign is reflected in both the number of entries the government received and their diversity of origin. By the time all the entries were submitted, the Department of Public Works had received a total of 127 submissions, each containing a written description of the proposed memorial and a rough sketch illustrating the monument's final form. Included among these were sixty-six from across Canada, twenty-four from England, twenty-three from France, seven originating from the United States, three from Belgium, one from Scotland, two from Italy, and one entry from the British colony of Trinidad.⁵⁴ From these 127 entries, the *Conditions of Open*

⁵¹ For a complete list of the days these publications carried advertisements for the competition, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "Newspapers which have received advertisements for Ottawa, Ont. National Commemorative War Monument," n.d.

⁵² The foreign publications that ran the advertisement were *The Times* (London), *Canada* (London), *Canadian Gazette* (London), *Architect* (London), *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (London), *Le Matin* (Paris), and *L'Independance Belge* (Brussels). A list of the days that foreign papers and journals ran advertisements for the competition can be found in *ibid*.

⁵³ I have been unable to find any records of, or references to, advertisements being run in American publications. However, given that multiple designs were submitted by American artists, it would seem likely that there were advertisements for the competition in the county.

⁵⁴ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, O'Brien to Hunter, July 18, 1925

Competition stipulated that the Board of Assessors must select no fewer than six but no more than ten finalists.⁵⁵ In order to limit any bias on the part of the judges, the assessors were unaware of the designs' origins and who had created them. Instead, each entry was assigned a number and judged solely on the merit of the design. The report released by the assessors on July 3, 1925 indicated that seven designs had been selected to move forward into the final round because of their fulfilment of the conditions in the competition guidelines.⁵⁶ The assessors chose three finalists from England, one from Scotland, one from the United States, and two from Canada. As is reflected in the written descriptions accompanying the seven finalists, the way in which they proposed to commemorate Canada's First World War experience was as varied as the places from which they originated.

The submission of F. Brock Hitch of London, England, identified to the judges only as number fifteen, possessed a number of symbolic features to commemorate Canada's participation in the war.⁵⁷ The principal feature of this entry was a large white marble column, rectangular in shape, rising out of the earth and resting on a granite plinth. In addition to the central column, a main feature of the proposed monument was the depiction of a medieval style warrior being greeted upon his return home with a "processional character bearing his Sword, Shield & Helm." Hitch's design also proposed to create two groups of bronze figures at the base of the monument. The first group is described as "a winged figure of self sacrifice gazing upwards clasping victory to its breast with subsidiary figures of 'Temptation' offering life and the joys of living and 'Fear' which have been overcome." The second grouping was said to represent "Peace

⁵⁵ LAC, RG 25, vol. 337, *Conditions of Open Competition*, 8.

⁵⁶ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Shepherd, Sproatt, and MacNeil to J.H. King, July 3, 1925.

⁵⁷ For all references to Hitch's design, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "15," n.d.

and her handmaidens rising from the clouds of Discord emitted by Strife,” which was represented by a dragon. The final feature of note from Hitch’s design was his suggestion to include eight shields at the very bottom of the memorial, each depicting a regimental badge of Canadian regiments that fought in the First World War. With the combination of these features, Hitch sought to commemorate Canada’s wartime experience by evoking notions of Canadian heroism and the triumph of chivalry.

Entry number forty-eight, submitted by architect T.A. Lodge and sculptor F.L. Roslyn of London, England, was also organized around a central granite column.⁵⁸ At the top of the column this design featured a bronze statue of the winged figure of victory. At the base of the memorial were four bronze groups, each symbolizing different aspects of the Canada’s war experience. The first grouping at the front of the memorial depicted a figure representative of Canada mourning the country’s supreme sacrifice. Group two, at the rear of the memorial, also contained a figure representative of the country. However, in this instance, Canada was depicted with a raised shield and a drawn sword protecting the helpless. A third group located on the right hand side of the monument represented the notion of remembrance. In order to convey this message, this bronze grouping featured a figure symbolizing remembrance, pointing outwards towards future generations and reminding them of the benefits enjoyed by all of humanity because of the bravery and heroism exhibited by the sacrifice of their fellow Canadians during the Great War. The fourth group of figures at the base of the memorial was designed to convey the idea of patriotism and depicted a younger man being urged to go forward by his older father to defend “Justice, Honour and Freedom.” The final feature of this entry was a pair of lions located on the plinth, inspiring notions of “Courage, Fortitude, Strength and

⁵⁸ For discussions of Lodge and Roslyn’s design, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, “48,” n.d.

Reliance of the Defenders.” All told, Lodge and Roslyn sought to create a memorial possessing the “spirit of Victory” for the purpose of immortalizing Canada’s defenders.

The stated purpose of R.W.G. Heughan and J.A. Aird’s entry was to commemorate the noble spirit and character of the Canadian people as exhibited during the Great War.⁵⁹ Referred to as design number eighty-seven, this entry was again designed around a vertical shaft. The column was to be made of granite and was symbolic of the country as a whole. The base of the proposed monument featured a carved laurel wreath with shields built into it, each representing one of the country’s provinces. Surmounting this feature, the designers called for a carving of the Royal Coat of Arms of Canada which had been adopted as the official coat of arms only a few years before. The base of the monument was also intended to contain two figures representing victory and peace. According to Heughan and Aird, the crowning feature of the memorial was the bronze grouping at the top of the column. Similar to the design submitted by Hitch, the central figure of this feature of the monument was a mounted horseman of the Middle Ages. Heughan and Aird described the purpose of this figure as “going forth in the defence of his rights” similar to the way in which the men and women of Canada had “gone forward... during the Great War, for the defence of peace and justice.” As stated in the description accompanying this design, the symbolic purpose of this group, and indeed the entire monument, was to focus on commemorating the character of Canadian soldiers during the war.

⁵⁹ All subsequent references to Heughan and Aird’s design are taken from LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, “87,” n.d.

The lone American design to move into the final round was created by Lucien E. Smith and Gaetano Cecero of New York City.⁶⁰ Listed as number ninety-seven, this entry also took the form of a column. Unlike the other entries, this column was described as a fluted Greek shaft carved from Tennessee marble and rising over seventy feet above the square below. The creators of this design argued that the proposed site for the memorial lent itself more towards the creation of a tall structure, such as the one they proposed, because it would be visible from all directions and thus become a dominant feature of the area. As with most of the other entries, there were a number of components to Smith and Cecero's design. Greeting visitors to the memorial, a figure symbolizing the country at peace was located at the base of the monument carrying a sword resting on a palm branch. This figure was intended to be flanked by two reliefs carved into the base of the monument. The first relief depicted a young soldier on his way to the front, leaving behind his mother and wife. On the opposite side, a carving showed the same soldier returning home from the war to his wife and young child. Carved decorative laurel garlands covered the top of the pedestal and wound around machinegun cartridge belts and trench helmets. At the top of the shaft the designs called for a tripod that Smith and Cecero explained was representative of the memorial's overarching message of the nation's sacrifice.

Entry number eighty-four, submitted by Francis Loring and W.L. Somerville of Toronto, featured a granite tower adorned with images and symbols representing Canadians' wartime experience.⁶¹ At the base of the memorial the designs called for two groups on either side, one depicting a mother and child and the other showing a farmer

⁶⁰ For the material presented in the description of Smith and Gaetano's design, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "97," n.d.

⁶¹ On the discussion of Loring and Somerville's design, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "84," n.d.

and representing the tremendous growth of the country. Above these figures, two reliefs were carved into the side of the monument. The first panel depicted a farmer, clerk, labourers, and a male and female student all prepared to cast aside their self-interests in order to fight and, if need be, die for the nation. The second panel portrayed more workers from a variety of professions but united in their common purpose of carrying forward the future of the nation. According to Loring and Somerville, these reliefs portrayed the people of Canada, as “the foundation of this land.” The crowning feature of their design was the three figures at the top of the monument that represented the “aspirations of the Canadian people.” The idea of progress was personified by the central figure. The artists emphasized that this progress was not only in terms of material growth, but spiritual growth as well. To the right of the figure of progress, a representation of justice stood tall with a sheathed sword at the ready. On the left hand side, a figure representing peace was also present, symbolizing notions such as wealth, friendship, and scientific as well as artistic achievements. These three figures and the ideas they represented were to be protected by the four soldiers guarding each side of the memorial, symbolic of their defence of the country. As stated by the entry’s designers, “these are the ones who have offered and given their lives for the support and protection of civilization—of progress, justice and peace.” To these men, and the ideals of the people they protect, Loring and Somerville dedicated their memorial.

The basic form of the design submitted by William J. Smith of Glasgow, Scotland, was significantly different from the other entries that made it to the second round of the competition.⁶² Entry number fifty-seven took the form of a large rectangular pylon rather than a column. Smith suggested that the broad 30 foot wide rectangular

⁶² All information relating to Smith’s design is taken from LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, “57,” n.d.

structure raising to a peak seventy feet above would constitute a more “dignified and imposing” memorial that would become a prominent fixture of the surrounding area. While this monument was described as simple in its design, Smith incorporated a number of symbolic and literal design elements into the granite structure to present the memorial’s messages to Canadians. On a dedication panel at the front of the lowermost base of the memorial, “appropriate texts” would be placed, while the back of the monument would include an inscription reading *Pro Patria 1914-1919*.⁶³ This statement carries a dual significance as *Pro Patria* translated to *for country* and was the motto of the Royal Canadian Regiment. Above the dedication panel, the design included a frieze of sculpted processional figures signifying the nation’s sacrifice and a relief of a life sized figure symbolizing the voluntary service of all classes of Canadians.⁶⁴ Below the frieze Smith included a band of maple leaves weaving through a number of shields, each containing a regimental crest. The final feature of the memorial was a bronze grouping depicting “a lion stamping out evil represented by an eagle.” Through the inclusion of these many features, Smith was able to appeal to the many themes called for by the competition guidelines, while maintaining the simplicity and clarity of meaning that he claimed his design possessed.

The seventh entry to be selected for the second stage of the competition was created by sculptor Vernon March of Farnborough, England.⁶⁵ Presented to the assessors as entry number ten, March’s entry possessed the most detailed description of the

⁶³ It is unclear why the inscription carried the year 1919 rather than 1918. It may be that this was simply a typo in the monument description that Smith submitted to the competition. Alternatively, Smith may have been referring to the Canadian military force that was sent to Vladivostok, Russia, between 1918 and 1919.

⁶⁴ A *frieze* is an architectural term referring to an ornamental horizontal band that often runs above a doorway or window. In the case of Smith’s entry, the frieze was designed to surround the panels and relief carvings on the front of the memorial.

⁶⁵ For all references in this discussion of March’s entry, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, “10,” n.d.

memorial's purpose of all the seven finalists. From the outset, March distinguished his entry from the other finalists by stating, "It has been the object of the sculptor to design a War Memorial that would be imposing and arresting through its Human interest, rather than to design a Memorial that relies on its great height and Architectural elaboration for effect." With this in mind, March's design was shorter than most of the other entries at only sixty feet tall and was framed around a central group of bronze figures at a height that people could clearly see them but that also allowed the viewing of the figures from any direction.

March's grouping of figures was designed to tell the story of the "Great Response" of the men and women of Canada to the Great War. March argued that focussing on the response of Canadians was the most effective way to depict the spirit of heroism and self-sacrifice called for in the *Conditions of Open Competition*, while at the same time avoiding any suggestion of the glorification of war. The figures on the memorial were highly detailed and historically accurate depictions of the uniforms and equipment used by Canadians during the war. In addition, the bronze figures were modeled after a number of elements of the Canadian forces, including the infantry, artillery, air force, navy, medical corps, and nursing associations. March explained that the expressions on the figures would be rendered carefully to avoid any form of fighting attitude. Instead, the figures would "express movement and the eagerness and enthusiasm of the people" to respond to the call. March stated that the bronze grouping would be resting on a granite pedestal and passing through an archway symbolizing "the going forth of the people and the triumph of their achievements overseas." The final feature of the memorial was a group of emblematic figures at the top of the monument bestowing

the blessings of peace, liberty, and victory on the Canadians passing through the archway below. March concluded by stating that the plinth contained ample space for a dedicatory inscription at the base of the memorial.

After the Board of Assessors selected the seven finalists, the designers were given until November 16, 1925 to send scale plaster models of their respective memorials, as required by the conditions governing the second phase of the competition. Initially the plans called for the assessors to meet in late November to select the winning entry. However, the judging of the models had to be delayed because of the deteriorating health of one of the assessors. Shortly before the models were scheduled to be judged, Shepherd informed Hunter that he had recently suffered a heart attack and was battling other illnesses.⁶⁶ Shepherd suggested that he could judge the competition from his home in Montreal if pictures of the models were sent to him, but instead it was decided that the competition would be delayed until the following month. The competition was again delayed when Shepherd told Hunter in mid-December that he was not yet healthy enough to travel to Ottawa.⁶⁷ Aware of the delay that he was causing, Shepherd suggested that the models and the other assessors be sent to an art gallery in Montreal to complete the competition. However, it was again decided to wait until he had recovered so that the judging could take place in Ottawa.⁶⁸ When all three of the assessors were ready to complete the competition, the seven designs were set up for display at the Public

⁶⁶ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Shepherd to Hunter, November 19, 1925.

⁶⁷ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Shepherd to Hunter, December 12, 1925.

⁶⁸ Considerable public interest surrounded the selection of the National Commemorative War Monument. As a result, the models and conceptual designs for the seven finalists were put on display for the public along with the written descriptions and artwork of the other 120 entries from the first stage of the competition. For more information relating to the public exhibition of the competition entries, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Hunter to Raoul Dandurand, July 20, 1925; and LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, R.C. Wright to John Sharpe, January 10, 1926.

Archives of Canada, where the assessors viewed them and made their decision on January 18, 1926.

In the *Report of the Assessors for the National Commemorative War Monument*, the Board of Assessors informed the government that, after a careful review of the seven entries and close consultation of the *Conditions of Open Competition*, they had unanimously recommended that entry number ten created by English sculptor Vernon March be given the commission.⁶⁹ Citing its adherence to the competition guidelines, the assessors stated that March's design was the most suitable way in which to commemorate the country's wartime experience. The recommendation of the assessors was not, however, without qualification. They suggested that the upper section of the monument be built in accordance with the original drawings, which were slightly taller than the scale model provided, and that overall dimensions of the memorial should be increased if Parliament was prepared to grant the funds.⁷⁰ After receiving the recommendation from the Board of Assessors, the Cabinet quickly approved their decision and awarded the contract to March.⁷¹ On February 11, 1926 March was informed that his design had been selected. He was to begin construction as soon as possible.⁷²

While the *Report of the Assessors* did not go into any great detail in explaining the specific reasons for the selection of March's design, it is possible to determine those elements that March included that distinguished his entry from the other six finalists. In the written description March submitted to the competition he explicitly stated that he

⁶⁹ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "*The Report of the Assessors for the National Commemorative War Monument*," January 18, 1926.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ LAC, RG 25, vol. 337, "Notes Concerning the National War Memorial to be Erected at Ottawa," n.d.

⁷² Reference to the date upon which March was informed that his design had won and the instructions given to him to commence work can be found in a brief created for the project in 1933. See LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "National Commemorative War Memorial: Ottawa," January 18, 1933, 3.

had taken every precaution to ensure that his design adhered to what was required by the competition guidelines.⁷³ When the assessors selected March's plan, they commended the artist for his adherence to the *Conditions of Open Competition*. March's faithfulness to the government's vision for the memorial is perhaps best illustrated by his focus on the service of Canadian soldiers. The competition guidelines called for a memorial that was dedicated "to the memory of those who participated in the Great War and lost their lives in the service of humanity."⁷⁴ But there was also a desire that the monument be centered solely on the Canadian experience. Most of the entries claimed to adhere to this component of the guidelines through the incorporation of a variety of commemorative features. However, entries fifteen, forty-eight, ninety-seven, and eighty four featured symbolic representations of such notions as victory, heroism, and sacrifice as the main element of their designs, none of which were unique to Canada's Great War experience.⁷⁵ While the bronze grouping at the top of the arch in March's design also incorporated similar symbolic aspects, the main component of his entry was distinctly Canadian. By building a central feature that provided a highly detailed and literal depiction of Canada's armed forces, March was able to distinguish his monument from the other finalists.

In addition to focussing on Canadians, the guidelines also stipulated that the monument was to be centered on overseas service.⁷⁶ The memorial was intended to be for

⁷³ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "10," n.d.

⁷⁴ LAC, RG 25, vol. 337, *Conditions of Open Competition*, 4.

⁷⁵ A number of the seven finalists elected to include very few, if any, features that distinguished their memorial as one dedicated specifically to the service of Canadians. While entries such as number eighty-four and forty-eight claimed to contain figures that represented Canadian workers or the country more broadly, there were no distinguishing features that would make this clear to onlookers.

⁷⁶ Another illustration of this sentiment is seen in the previously discussed section of the competition guidelines which state, "It is the spirit of heroism, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the spirit of all that is noble and great that was exemplified in the lives of those sacrificed in the Great War, and the services rendered by the men and women who went Overseas; it is that vision which the government wishes to keep alive in erecting a monument of this kind." See *ibid*.

those Canadians who, in one capacity or another, left Canada in defence of the nation. Yet a number of the entries incorporated references to the sacrifices made on the home front. Indeed, the dominant features of entry numbers ninety-seven and eighty-four pivoted around the sacrifices made by Canadians in Canada. March's design, however, did not. Although not the only one to do so, March's entry was very much in keeping with an emphasis on Canadian service men and women's overseas service and wartime experience.

The way in which March presented a common war experience shared among all Canadians was another aspect that distinguished his design from many of the other finalists. In multiple entries elements were included that could be construed as suggesting a country broken up into many sections. In entry fifty-seven, the artist incorporated shields containing the crests of several regiments from across the country; this design feature acknowledged the existence of soldiers from different regions of Canada. In a similar example, entry eighty-seven proposed to include shields depicting the crests of the provinces. In March's design, there was no acknowledgement of the existence of multiple regions of the country. Instead, the figures passing through the arch, although highly detailed, could have been from any part of Canada. One of the prominent messages conveyed by March's design was that of unity. Whether intentionally or inadvertently, by failing to identify people from different backgrounds, March adhered to the *Conditions of Open Competition* that indicated the memorial was to represent a broad, national sentiment representative of Canadians' shared view of the conflict.

The discrepancies between the *Conditions of Open Competition* and the other six entries cannot fully account for March's design being selected over the other finalists.

Each of the seven designs was selected because, in one way or another, the assessors believed that the entries embodied the vision of the memorial expressed by the government. However, the *Great Response* had gone the furthest to embody the meanings and ideals that the government desired in the memorial. March, indeed, was very clear in explaining his adherence to the competition guidelines. Whether it was his focus on unity, Canadian soldiers' overseas experience, or his declaration that his memorial was in no way a glorification of war, March followed the guidelines more closely than any other entry. Doubtless as a result, he was awarded the contract and made responsible for the memorialization of Canada's First World War experience.

It is difficult to overemphasize the role that the Prime Minister played in this phase of the monument's creation. From the project's inception, when he first spoke publically about the memorial, Mackenzie King played a fundamental role in establishing the commemorative purposes that were imbedded in the competition guidelines, guided March when creating his entry, and were used by the assessors to select a winning design. But King was not alone in this national endeavour. Many other individuals including Hunter, Osborne, Brown, the three members of the Board of Assessors, and, March himself, made significant contributions to the memorial. Furthermore, the lessons learned from previous commemorative efforts conducted by the CBMC and other memorializations being created at the time influenced the National War Memorial during this period.

From the initial discussions of the project in Parliament, throughout the issuing of the *Conditions of Open Competition*, and during the competition phase, the King Government had a clear understanding of what the memorial was intended to represent.

As progress was made on the memorial in the years that followed, a number of alterations would be made to the monument's design. However, the broad purposes of the memorial were not significantly altered as the memorial was created. Those changes that were made were done so as to reinforce and expand on the messages that the government wanted the memorial to portray and the design elements that March built into his proposal.

The ideas that were imbedded in the project in 1923 remained central to the National War Memorial project. While the monument was intended to be a powerful declaration of the country's pride in the heroism and self-sacrifice exhibited by Canadian soldiers on the battlefield, it was also imbued with notions that went beyond commemorating the service of Canadians overseas and the country's war dead. When the memorial was first announced to the Canadian people, it was said to be expressive of the feelings of the Canadian people as a whole. It was presented by the Prime Minister in such a way as to suggest the existence of a shared memory of the First World War, widely held by an overwhelming majority of Canadians. These same ideas were present throughout the competition phase of the memorial. The guidelines are replete with judgements, explicit and implicit, that all Canadians viewed the war in a similar fashion. While the government did not directly select the winning entry for the competition, its understanding of the commemorative functions of the memorial was instrumental in the final decision. In creating his design, March followed the competition guidelines with the utmost care. The Board of Assessors, too, relied upon the expressed purposes of the memorial outlined in the competition guidelines. Throughout this initial phase of the

memorial's creation, the monument was infused with notions of national unity, shared sacrifice, and a common understanding of the impact of the war on Canadian society.

CHAPTER TWO – ‘The Very Soul of the Nation is Here Revealed’: The Making of the Canadian National War Memorial

The unveiling of the National War Memorial took place in Ottawa on a Sunday morning in May 1939. Those in attendance at the event included King George VI, who was in Ottawa as part of the 1939 royal tour of Canada, Governor General Lord Tweedsmuir, and Prime Minister Mackenzie King. Thousands of past and present members of all branches of the Canadian forces were given a prominent place on the sides of the memorial in recognition of their service and sacrifice for their country. Reporting on the proceedings of the day, the *Ottawa Citizen* remarked that an estimated 100,000 onlookers had filled the square, were lined up on nearby Parliament Hill, or were standing on the rooftops of nearby buildings to catch a glimpse of the proceedings.¹ While the *Citizen* reported that the monument was a tribute to the soldiers of the Great War, it also stated that the memorial served a broader purpose: “The memorial is symbolic in every contour and also in its place in the minds of the people. It symbolizes pride in remembrance of the past and confident hope in the future; a nation rising in defence of the things it cherished; the gratitude of a Motherland.”² Although the ceremonies were surrounded by concerns over growing tensions in Europe in the spring of 1939, the unveiling of the memorial was made into a positive and momentous occasion.

Over thirteen years had passed between the assessors’ selection of Vernon March’s design in January 1926 to the unveiling of the monument on May 21, 1939.

¹ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, “Moving and Inspiring is Ceremony at Unveiling Performed by the King,” *Ottawa Citizen*, May 21, 1939.

² *Ibid.*

Alterations to the monument's design, the death of March, slowdowns in the redevelopment projects for the city of Ottawa, and the economic depression of the 1930s all delayed the completion of the memorial. During this period, two issues continued to emerge that led to significant discussions and often to debate. The first related to efforts to ensure that the memorial was broadly representational and possessed a distinctly Canadian character. Discussions about this issue began almost immediately after the contract was awarded to March and continued until the last alterations to March's original design were completed in 1933. The second issue was associated with the location of the monument. Although the government had suggested that the memorial would be built on Connaught Place, debates about the eventual location of the monument continued until late 1937, only a few months before construction began on the site. While a number of other questions arose during this final stage of the memorial's creation, these two themes were the dominant concerns of those involved in the project and became woven into nearly all aspects of the memorial's creation.

Almost immediately after March was awarded the contract, efforts were made to ensure that progress was made on the memorial as quickly as possible. On March 20, 1926 Prime Minister King met with Vernon March's brother, Sydney, while he was visiting Ottawa. While Vernon was the sculptor and designer of the monument, Sydney had also played a significant role in creating the memorial and was responsible for overseeing the architectural elements of the design. During their meeting, King and Sydney March spoke about a number of issues pertaining to the memorial, including the Prime Minister's desire to see the memorial built at Connaught Place and to ensure that the Board of Assessors' recommendation to increase the overall dimensions of the

monument was carried through. Writing in his diary that evening, King stated that he was pleased that the March brothers agreed to these recommendations, with both Vernon and Sydney viewing the proposed site as “ideal” and acknowledging the need to increase the size of the memorial.³

In order to accommodate these alterations to the monument’s design, Cabinet determined in April 1926 that it would be necessary to increase the project’s budget. When the project was initially approved by Parliament, it was decided that \$100,000 would be allocated to the initiative. However, it was determined by Cabinet that the total budget for the now larger memorial would be \$185,000. While this increase was significant, King felt that the final result would justify this new figure. In his diary on April 13, 1926 the Prime Minister stated, “It will be the perfect thing, the finest monument I believe on the continent, and as we know the people who are executing it we are taking no risks in the extra size. As a national monument of the most significant epoch in our history it cannot be made too credible to the nation.”⁴ Taking into account the alterations, Vernon March believed that it would take four years to complete the memorial. The Prime Minister was surprised to learn that the construction phase would be so lengthy, and the March brothers were instructed to begin construction of the bronze figures immediately.⁵

During this initial construction period, the government wanted to ensure that the memorial maintained the uniquely Canadian character called for in the guidelines. Beginning with the initial announcement of the project, there was an ever-present desire

³ WLMK Diary, March 20, 1926.

⁴ WLMK Diary, April 13, 1926.

⁵ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 135, C-2291, Sydney March to WLMK, April 28, 1926; and LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 135, C-2291, WLMK to Sydney March, May 3, 1926.

to distinguish Canada's First World War experience from that of other nations. Only a few months after Vernon March's design was selected, the Prime Minister took actions to ensure that this underlying purpose continued to be understood by those involved in the project. While attending the 1926 Imperial Conference, King wrote to his Minister of National Defence, James L. Ralston, bringing him into the project.⁶ He informed Ralston that the March brothers were concerned by issues pertaining to the authenticity of the memorial. As outlined in the description of Vernon March's entry, the figures on the memorial were intended to be highly detailed in their representation of Canada's overseas forces during the Great War. March had recently informed the Prime Minister that there were questions relating to the historical accuracy of the bronzes that would have to be resolved before any progress could be made on the project. King decided that Ralston would be responsible for addressing these concerns. In addition, he recommended that the Minister of National Defence consult with John A. Pearson, the lead architect and driving force behind the Memorial Chamber in the Centre Block of Parliament Hill, for all matters pertaining to the authenticity of the figures. In explaining the significance of this task, King wrote that "It is, I think, most important that every detail should be marked with as much perfection as possible, especially those features of the Memorial which are distinctfully [sic] Canadian."⁷

For the remainder of 1926 through to the summer of 1928, the March brothers continued to work on the creation of the bronze figures. The first order of business was to produce a final scale model that accounted for the increased dimensions called for by the

⁶ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 135, C-2291, WLMK to J.L. Ralston, October 25, 1926.

⁷ On multiple occasions during the early stages of the memorial's creation, Mackenzie King refers to the need to ensure the "distinctfully Canadian" nature of the memorial. Based on his repeated use of the phrase, it is clear that this is not merely a single typographical error. For an example of his use of this phrase, see *ibid.*

Cabinet. In November 1926 Vernon March informed King that, despite the Prime Minister's inability to visit his studio outside of London when he was attending the Imperial Conference, he appreciated the assistance the Prime Minister had been giving him and that definite progress was being made.⁸ In the year and a half that followed, Vernon March completed his scale models and continued work on the production of clay molds for the bronze figures. On August 21, 1928 he contacted the Prime Minister informing him of the progress he had made and the concerns that he continued to have about the accuracy of the figures. In his letter he wrote:

All the historical details of the Fighting Forces of Canada have been left entirely for my decision, and not one line of advice have I received from the Military or Archives Departments of Canada. May I ask that you do not interpret this as avoidance on my part of responsibility, but really, Mr Mackenzie King, I do not feel that, to rely as I have done, on the Imperial War Museum entirely, is going to be satisfactory to the people of Canada; it misses those little personal touches of detail which were so dear to the heart of Canadians in France. Though it may only be a trifling difference of buttons or straps on the equipment, these little details should be correctly set forth in the sculptured bronze figures.⁹

King wrote to March to tell him that he was surprised to learn that the sculptor was not receiving the guidance he had promised him when he had assigned Ralston to the project.¹⁰ He also agreed that it was crucial that these features be fully accurate in their depiction of the First World War Canadian forces in order for it to achieve a uniquely Canadian quality. The Prime Minister recommended that March send a letter to the Minister of National Defence informing him that King wanted Ralston to resolve these issues forthwith. At the same time, King sent a letter to Ralston explaining the situation

⁸ Months earlier, Mackenzie King had informed the March brothers that he intended to visit their studio in Farnborough, Kent while in London to attend the 1926 Imperial Conference. However, he was forced to cancel his visit due to unforeseen circumstances. For Vernon March's letter updating the Prime Minister on progress, see LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 135, C-2291, Vernon March to WLMK, November 22, 1926.

⁹ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 154, C-2304, Vernon March to WLMK, August 21, 1928.

¹⁰ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 154, C-2304, WLMK to Vernon March, August 25, 1928.

and asking him personally to ensure that queries from the March brothers were answered as quickly as possible.¹¹ The Prime Minister again stated that it was essential that the “distinctfully [sic] Canadian” elements of the monument be thoroughly detailed and accurate in their representation of Canadians in the First World War.¹²

The letter that Vernon March sent to Ralston conveys the level of accuracy that the sculptor wanted the memorial to possess. Included among those issues that needed to be addressed were such minor details as the type and date of the Field Gun used by the Canadian artillery.¹³ In addition, March asked Ralston if any Canadians had ever served in the Royal Marines and which uniform of the Canadian Nursing Association the government would like included in the memorial. Perhaps the most significant request pertained to the unique styling of Canadian uniforms. March asked that information regarding the slight differences between Canadian uniforms worn in France during active service and the standard British uniforms be sent to him as soon as possible. Furthermore, he asked Ralston if it would be possible to send him information about the uniforms and equipment for non-commissioned members of the Navy, Army Medical Corps, Nursing Association, Artillery, Cavalry, Royal Engineers, machine gunners, bombers, pioneers, telegraphists, Air Force, and the infantry (to be represented by a Lewis Gunner). If the memorial was to be broadly representational, this could only be achieved through the creation of highly detailed figures on the monument from as many segments of Canadian overseas forces as possible. Every effort was now made to guarantee that March was given the necessary resources to capture this element of the memorial’s stated purpose.

¹¹ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 162, C-2310, WLMK to Ralston, August 28, 1928.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Information relating to those issues on which Vernon March asked Ralston for clarification can be found in *ibid.*

In the months that followed, steps were taken to ensure that the March brothers could resolve their concerns and move forward with their creation of the bronze figures. In addition to Ralston's more active role in assisting with the project, Brigadier-General James Sutherland Brown, who had been stationed at the newly created Imperial Defence College in London, was assigned as a liaison between the March brothers and Ottawa.¹⁴ All concerns that arose during this period were directed towards Brown in an effort quickly to resolve any delays that arose. Among those issues on which Brown had a significant impact was the decision to show several of the figures wearing their regimental hats rather than their standard helmets in hopes of distinguishing between the different branches of the armed forces.¹⁵ In a letter to King on September 25, 1928, March stated that the services rendered by Brown continued to be "of great assistance to me in the many decisions which we have to decide on... from the military and historical point of view."¹⁶ Adding to the assistance provided by Brown, King was able to visit the March brothers' studio while he was in England following his visit to Paris and the League of Nations in Geneva in the fall of 1928. While Vernon was not at the studio because of illness, the Prime Minister met with Sydney March and helped to address a variety of minor concerns that the March brothers still had.¹⁷

In January 1929 Vernon March wrote to the Deputy Minister of Public Works, J.B. Hunter, informing him that all the matters concerning the historical accuracy of the

¹⁴ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 154, C-2304, Vernon March to WLMK, September 25, 1928.

¹⁵ In the original designs submitted by Vernon March, the sculptor had included many of the different regimental hats to help distinguish the figures. However, during his preparations of the clay molds, March stated that he altered many of the figures so that they were wearing a 'tin hat,' or standard helmet. For more information regarding this issue, see *ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ While visiting the studio, Mackenzie King took the time to visit Vernon March at his residence to check in on the ill sculptor of the memorial. Shortly after his visit, March wrote the Prime Minister and told him that his visit had inspired him to return to work as soon as possible. See LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 154, C-2304, Vernon March to WLMK, October 23, 1928.

figures had been decided upon.¹⁸ In addition, March mentioned that he required final approval and a decision on which two figures should be added to the original seventeen figure bronze grouping. While the announcement that March intended to increase the number of figures on the monument caught the Deputy Minister by surprise, Hunter appeared receptive. From its inception, the memorial had been designed to be as broadly inclusive as possible. The announcement by March that there was room for more members of Canada's forces provided the opportunity to further this objective. On January 15, 1929 Hunter instructed Harry Baldwin, Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, to inform King of the opportunity to increase the number of figures on the memorial and the Deputy Minister stated that he would determine when, and through which means, March had received approval for this alteration to the monument's design.

After discussing the matter with the Prime Minister, Baldwin informed Hunter that, while King had no recollection of approving additional figures, he had repeatedly "expressed his hope that it might be as representative as possible" and said that the decision rested with Ralston.¹⁹ Through further investigation into the issue, Hunter determined that Ralston was already involved in the approval of the additional figures. On December 10, 1928 Brown, serving as liaison with March, had informed Herbert Cyril Thacker, Chief of the General Staff, that the architect believed the increased dimensions of the memorial would allow for two new bronze figures to be added to the rear of the memorial without disturbing the continuity of the original grouping.²⁰ Brown also stated that March needed direction regarding which branches of the armed forces

¹⁸ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 162, C-2310, Vernon March to J.B. Hunter, January 1929.

¹⁹ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 162, C-2310, Harry Baldwin to Hunter, January 22, 1929.

²⁰ For a copy of Brown's original letter to Thacker, see LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 162, C-2310, George J. Desbarats to Hunter, January 21, 1929.

these figures should represent. Under the direction of Ralston, Thacker had instructed Brown to relay to March the government's decision that the new figures should depict members of the previously excluded signals corps and the army service corps.²¹

The March brothers continued their work on the memorial throughout the course of 1929 and into the summer of 1930. On April 29, 1929 King wrote to Sydney March commending him on the excellent work that had gone into the recent completion of the allegorical figures of peace and victory. King informed March that he was pleased with the craftsmanship of these figures, which would rest at the top of the memorial, and stated that he had "shown it to several members of parliament and other leading citizens, and they share my delight in the fullest measure."²² While being careful to not suggest that the March brothers should compromise the quality of their work by trying to produce the figures quickly, King again inquired how long they believed it would take to complete the bronze work. The following month Sydney responded to the Prime Minister's inquiry: while definitive progress was being made, it was still too early to provide a fixed date upon which the government could expect delivery.²³ Instead, he estimated that they hoped to have all work on the figures completed within two years time.

Despite Sydney March's optimism, the project encountered a significant delay that neither the March brothers nor Ottawa could have foreseen. On June 11, 1930 Vernon March, who had been responsible for the creation of *The Response*, died suddenly after a short battle with pneumonia. While the loss of Vernon was a significant blow to those involved in the project, its impact was not catastrophic. Since being

²¹ A transcript of Thacker's letter to Brown from December 22, 1928 is also contained in *ibid.*

²² LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 165, C-2311, WLMK to Sydney March, April 29, 1929.

²³ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 165, C-2311, Sydney March to WLMK, May 28, 1929.

awarded the contract to create the memorial, Vernon had relied heavily on assistance from his brother Sydney, who was responsible for the majority of the correspondence with Ottawa and was working hand in hand with Vernon to bring about the project's completion. In addition, Vernon had five other brothers and one sister who had been involved in the project to varying degrees and possessed the expertise necessary to carry on his work.²⁴ At the time of March's death, most of the clay models were completed and some of the bronze work was either finished or well underway. However, the death of March meant that work on the figures had to be put on hold for several months while his estate was settled.²⁵ During this period, no payments could be made by the Government of Canada and work on the memorial came to a standstill.²⁶

Before Vernon March's death in 1930, another significant issue had emerged that greatly affected the National War Memorial project. Dating back to the initial announcement of the plan by the Minister of Public Works, James Horace King, in March 1923, the government had been very clear in their desire to build the memorial at Connaught Place.²⁷ This desire was carried forward in the original *Conditions of Open Competition* released in February of 1925, in which those persons creating entries for the competition were instructed to design their memorials to be built at this location.²⁸

²⁴ For a brief discussion of the role played by Vernon's six siblings, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "National Commemorative War Memorial Ottawa," January 18, 1933.

²⁵ Jonathan Vance, "The Great Response: Canada's Long Struggle to Honour the Dead of the Great War," *The Beaver* 76, no. 5, (October/November 1996): 31.

²⁶ From late 1930 to early 1931, dozens of letters were sent back and forth between Ottawa and March's studio in Farnborough, Kent, England. In this correspondence, issues were discussed such as the transfer of responsibility for the sculpted figures to Sydney as well as Vernon's other siblings, issues pertaining to insurance, and new contract discussions to complete the work. For more information on these discussions and other matters relating to the delay caused by the death of Vernon March, see LAC, RG 25, vol. 338.

²⁷ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Second Session—Fourteenth Parliament, vol. 155 (March 9, 1923), 1020.

²⁸ LAC, RG 25, vol. 337, *Conditions of Open Competition for the Selection of a Design for A National Commemorative War Monument To be Erected in the City of Ottawa, Canada*, February 12, 1925, 6.

However, shortly after the plan was initially announced, many individuals and groups came out against the proposed site. Notable among those who opposed the memorial being located at Connaught Place were the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) and the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA). On January 24, 1925 the executive of the PPCLI Club wrote to the Minister of Public Works informing him of a recent resolution passed by the club's members. In the resolution the PPCLI stated: "this Association strongly protest against [the] National War Memorial being placed in Connaught Place, being of the opinion that the proper site for the National War Memorial is in a commanding position in front of the Parliament Buildings on National Property."²⁹ A similar critique was offered in the letter presented to the government by the Dominion Secretary of the GWVA, C. Grant MacNeil, when he stated that his membership also preferred that the memorial be located on Parliament Hill.³⁰ While several individuals and associations called for the memorial to be located directly in front of the Parliament Buildings, the Ottawa Town Planning Commission (OTPC) suggested an alternative site that they believed would serve as the most suitable location for a national commemorative monument for the First World War. A letter drafted by OTPC chairman Noulan Cauchon, proposed that the monument be built on the shore overlooking the Ottawa River, immediately west of Parliament Hill.³¹ Commenting on the OTPC's recommendation, the *Ottawa Citizen* applauded the suggested location, which it described as "magnificent" and visible from many parts of the city.

²⁹ While the letter to J.H. King was written by the Secretary Treasurer of the PPCLI, Walter A. Garvin, it contained a copy of the resolution that the organization's members passed on January 14, 1925. See LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, Walter A. Garvin to J. H. King, January 24, 1925.

³⁰ The critique offered by the GWVA and OTPC can be found in LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "Connaught Place Chosen," *Ottawa Citizen*, January 5, 1925.

³¹ The site that the OTPC proposed was at the northernmost end of Lyon Street. In today's Ottawa, this site is between the buildings housing Library and Archives Canada and the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Prime Minister's response to the GWVA helps to explain why his government was in favour of the proposed site over the various others that had been put forward.³² King wrote that his government and the House of Commons carefully considered this issue before making a decision. Furthermore, he stated that initial appropriation of funds that the House granted the project was repeatedly promised to be for a commemorative memorial at Connaught Place. While he was clear in his support for the proposed location, King did not downplay the many advantages that would be associated with a memorial on Parliament Hill. In addressing this issue, the Prime Minister stated, "Parliament Hill as a very appropriate place for the location of a monument comes very naturally to mind at first thought; and indeed such was the case in the mind of my colleagues and myself when we considered... recommending to Parliament Connaught Place."

King identified three reasons why Connaught Place was chosen over other sites. First, there was already a considerable amount of commemoration on The Hill, including the Memorial Chamber, the commemorative column in the Hall of Honour, and the Peace Tower, which King described as an "imposing war memorial." He explained that "these memorials seemed to the government as sufficient in themselves for Parliament Hill." The second justification provided was that the government chose to follow general customs established by other commemorative efforts. Referring specifically to the British national war memorial in Whitehall, London, and the Nelson Monument in nearby Trafalgar Square, the Prime Minister argued that Canada's monument should be placed at the most central location in the capital. For King and the Cabinet Art Committee, no site

³² Unless otherwise indicated, all information in this section relating to the Prime Minister's justification for Connaught Place can be found in LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "Connaught Place Chosen," *Ottawa Citizen*, January 5, 1925.

better fulfilled this requirement than Connaught Place. The final reason that was provided was that the proposed site would be the most visible in the capital. He stated “it would be hard to conceive of any spot at which the monument will be seen by a larger number of visitors to the Capital, or by its citizens from day to day, than the quite exceptional site which Connaught Place provides.” For these reasons the government held firm in their support for Connaught Place and continued to move forward with plans to build the memorial on this site.

Despite the certainty with which they favoured Connaught Place over other locations, the government faced a considerable number of problems in relation to the site of the memorial. These difficulties can largely be attributed to the ongoing efforts of the period to redevelop and beautify the capital.³³ On March 24, 1926 members of the federal government met with a delegation representing the municipal interests of Ottawa. Those in attendance for the federal government included the Prime Minister, J.B. Hunter, Sydney March, and the Chief Architect of Public Works, R.C. Wright. Representing the city of Ottawa were Mayor John Balharrie, former mayors William Borthwick and Olivier Durocher, Ottawa M.P. Stewart McClenaghan, Cauchon of the OTPC, and more than a dozen other aides, advisors, and community figures. The meeting had been arranged by the city of Ottawa delegation to request that the Government of Canada clearly state its intentions in regards to the memorial, specifically as they pertained to the estimated cost of the project and the merits of Connaught Place as the site for the monument. While questions relating to associated costs were quickly addressed, the

³³ Throughout the nineteenth and into the first half of the twentieth century a number of initiatives were undertaken for the redevelopment of Ottawa. Several studies have examined this topic at great length. For a relatively brief analysis of the development efforts during the period and the key actors involved, see David L.A. Gordon, “From Noblesse Oblige to Nationalism: Elite Involvement in Planning Canada’s Capital,” *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 1 (November 2001): 3-34.

federal government went to great lengths to explain the rationale behind their support for the proposed location. The Prime Minister said that he was “prepared to go to the limit in beautifying this city” and that this required that the government expropriate all of the buildings surrounding the plaza at Connaught Place.³⁴ Referring to how Napoleon had expropriated the centre of Paris in the early-nineteenth century, King stated that this area would have to be brought under the control of the federal government in order to beautify the downtown core and make the National War Memorial a central fixture of the capital.³⁵

To the great pleasure of the Prime Minister, Sydney March explained that his family viewed this location as the best option and that part of the impact of the memorial would be lost if it were located elsewhere, a position echoed by Public Works Chief Architect Wright.³⁶ Based on the justifications provided at the meeting, the delegation for the City of Ottawa left the meeting with the impression that the Prime Minister possessed a good “broad-mindedness to carry on the work for the beautification of the Capital.”³⁷ That evening King wrote in his diary that, while it would be costly to redevelop the area

³⁴ In order to accommodate the development of Confederation Square, a number of buildings around Connaught Place and on Elgin Street were expropriated and demolished between 1928 and 1938. Included among these buildings were the Knox Presbyterian Church, the post office, and the offices of the Royal Bank of Canada. While these properties proved relatively easy to purchase, it was believed that Ottawa’s foremost hotel at the time, Russell House, and City Hall would prove more difficult to acquire. The Russell House and City Hall were destroyed by fires on April 14, 1928 and March 31, 1931. After their destruction the government was easily able to purchase the properties. For the Prime Minister’s statement about the lengths he was willing to go to see that the memorial was built at Connaught Place, see LAC, MG 26, J4, vol. 147, C-2731, “Delegation of the City of Ottawa which interviewed Members of the Government on Wednesday, March 24, 1926 at 2:30 p.m. in House of C.,” March 24, 1925, 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

³⁶ Writing in his diary after having first met Sydney March a few days prior to the meeting with the Ottawa delegation, King wrote that he “was delighted to find that he regards the site I selected as ‘ideal’ and prefers it to all others suggested.” See WLMK Diary, March 20, 1926.

³⁷ LAC, MG 26, J4, vol. 147, C-2731, “Delegation of the City of Ottawa,” March 24, 1925, 5.

around Connaught place, it could and would be done. On this subject he commented, “I am going to try hard to get these improvements in my regime.”³⁸

During the period between the city’s approval of the federal government’s plans and the death of Vernon March in the summer of 1930, letters were sent back and forth between Ottawa and the March brothers, explaining to them the evolving plans concerning the site. In April 1926, King wrote to Sydney March informing him of the government’s recent procurement of the land and buildings surrounding Connaught Place. The Prime Minister stated that, with the necessary expropriations, there was “every reason to believe that some day the monument will have a position second to none in the world.”³⁹ Late in the summer of 1928 King wrote to Vernon March to apprise him of the new developments regarding Connaught Place. He stated that the government had decided to “open up the centre of the city,” which required that the location of the memorial be altered slightly.⁴⁰ While it was not yet clear what form this new open space would take, King explained that the new city improvement plans required that the memorial be placed at the centre of a circle, representing the centre of the city and resembling the placement of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

In October 1928 the March brothers wrote to the Prime Minister to express their views. In Sydney’s opinion, this new plan would “greatly enhance the appearance of the memorial” and would be fitting considering the significance of the monument.⁴¹

Expressing a similar viewpoint, Vernon wrote that the alterations to the site, which ensured that the memorial would not be in close proximity to any other structures, would

³⁸ WLMK Diary, March 13, 1926.

³⁹ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 135, C-2291, WLMK to Sydney March, April 25, 1926.

⁴⁰ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 154, C-2304, WLMK to Vernon March, August 25, 1928.

⁴¹ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 154, C-2304, Sydney March to WLMK, October 22, 1928.

provide an “ideal” and “magnificent setting” for the monument.⁴² There was, however, one issue about which the two brothers cautioned the government. They both expressed concern about the proximity of the memorial to high volume traffic and tram lines. Vernon particularly stressed this point: “I feel very strongly, that to be able to contemplate a ‘Memorial to the Dead’, one needs reasonable peace and quietness.”⁴³ So long as this issue was dealt with, the two brothers fully supported the government’s position. King thanked them for “so frank an expression of views” and assured them that their idea would be taken into consideration when developing the site.⁴⁴

While the death of Vernon March certainly held up the competition of the bronze work, the depression of the 1930s was largely responsible for the significant delays that now plagued the project. Many of the Ottawa redevelopment initiatives were put on hold because the government was unable to afford them. In August 1930, only two months after the death of the monument’s designer, R.B. Bennett’s Conservative government took power until October 1935. Progress on the memorial was slow during Bennett’s tenure. However, Bennett continued the work of his predecessor and made decisions that influenced the National War Memorial project. Most of the alterations made to the memorial while Bennett was Prime Minister seemed to reinforce many of the ideas that King had promoted since the initial announcement of the monument. Indeed, the way in which Bennett approached this commemorative initiative suggested bipartisan support for the memorial and the messages it sought to convey.

⁴² LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 154, C-2304, Vernon March to WLMK, October 23, 1928.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 154, C-2304, WLMK to Vernon March, November 6, 1928; and LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 154, C-2304, WLMK to Sydney March, November 6, 1928.

Bennett's tangible involvement with the project began in December 1931, when he visited March's studio in England. Along with the Secretary to the High Commission of Canada in London, Lieutenant-Colonel Georges Vanier, the Prime Minister made this informal visit to inspect the work that had been done by Sydney March and his remaining siblings. The Prime Minister found that work had been progressing smoothly and that all but one of the nineteen figures were nearing completion. Commenting on Bennett's impression of the work, *The Times* (London) stated that "Bennett was impressed by the fidelity and beauty of the sculpture."⁴⁵ Work continued on the memorial and in July 1932 Sydney March informed Ottawa that all work on the nineteen bronze figures had been completed.⁴⁶ Aware that he would finish his work in the coming months and that the site of the memorial would not yet be complete, March raised with Bennett the possibility of putting the memorial on temporary display in Hyde Park, London.⁴⁷ He believed that it was important to show that work was progressing on the memorial, despite delays relating to the site in Ottawa. March's recommendation was not without precedent. In 1930 New Zealand's National War Memorial Carillon, which was also partially built in England, had been put on display in Hyde Park.⁴⁸ Based on March's recommendation, the government decided to follow New Zealand's example and in April 1932 King George V,

⁴⁵ "Mr. Bennett's Return: Inspection of Canadian War Memorial," *The Times* (London), December 4, 1931.

⁴⁶ The reference to Sydney informing Ottawa of the completion of work can be found in a brief created for the project in 1933. See LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "National Commemorative War Memorial: Ottawa," January 18, 1933.

⁴⁷ Sydney first proposed this idea to Bennett when the Prime Minister visited his studio in 1931. While Bennett thought there was merit in March's recommendation, he made no decision on the matter, instead electing to defer a decision until he returned to Ottawa. After having received no guidance on the issue, March again relayed a message to Bennett through Vanier to ask for a final decision about his proposition. See LAC, MG 26, K, vol. 815, M-1463, Howard Ferguson to O.D. Skelton, January 11, 1932; and LAC, RG 25, vol. 338, Sydney March to Georges Vanier, n.d.

⁴⁸ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "National Commemorative War Memorial Ottawa," January 18, 1933, 5.

who served as Ranger of the Royal Parks, granted permission for Canada's National War Memorial to be temporarily erected at the site.⁴⁹

Between October 1932 and May 1933, the monument was placed in Hyde Park and put on display for the British public. In order to provide onlookers with a general idea of the form the monument would take, the bronze figures were placed on a temporary plinth similar to the one called for in Ottawa. While many elements were either scaled down or not included in the temporary structure, the Hyde Park exhibition nonetheless served its purpose of displaying much of the completed work. When it was announced that the figures would be put on display in the park, the government was careful to stipulate that the memorial was simply being made available for "public inspection."⁵⁰ In order not to detract from the planned dedication ceremony in Ottawa, there was no informal unveiling in Hyde Park.

When the Hyde Park version of the memorial was being disassembled to be sent back to the studio in Farnborough, one of the figures was damaged and required repairs after it came loose from the plinth and fell to the ground.⁵¹ Further worrying the March brothers, many observers pointed out that the archway was too narrow for the artillery piece at the rear of the memorial to pass through. As historian Jonathan Vance suggests in his brief account of the delays associated with the memorial, it would have been

⁴⁹ For Bennett's approval of the initiative, see LAC, MG 26, K, vol. 815, M-1463, Skelton to Ferguson, January 26, 1932; for reference to King George V's granting the government permission to temporarily display the memorial in Hyde Park, see LAC, MG 26, K, vol. 815, M-1463, Vanier to Skelton, April 1, 1932.

⁵⁰ Reference to the careful wording of "public inspection" can be found in a weekly report by the Office of the High Commissioner and in an article in the London based newspaper *The Times*. See LAC, RG 25, vol. 337, "Weekly Bulletin: Canadian National War Memorial," October 25, 1932; and "Canadian National War Memorial," *The Times* (London), October 21, 1932.

⁵¹ Vance, "The Great Response," 31.

unacceptable for any of the bronze figures representing Canada's *Great Response* to "suffer the embarrassing fate of being stuck halfway through the arch."⁵²

To resolve this oversight, Bennett recommended that the overall dimensions of the memorial be altered. It was quickly decided that the arch would be made three feet wider and six and a half feet taller. In addition, March had increased the dimensions of the plinth for the figures at the request of the High Commissioner, Howard Ferguson, who was now one of the principal liaisons between Ottawa and the sculptor's studio. Following these recommendations, March discovered a fundamental problem that would result from the increased dimensions. In January 1933 he wrote to Bennett about the changes that had been made and their combined effect:

The memorial, as a whole, will be much more imposing and eliminates any argument about the Gun passing through the Arch.

This has, however, as you will realise, opened up a large space at either side of the horse passing under the Arch and has the effect of detaching the front group of figures from the rear portion of the group of figures and spoils the continuity of the movement which is so often praised by visitors to Hyde Park, and which is, in our opinion, one of the strong points in the design or composition of the ensemble.

This difficulty I have been able to rectify by the inclusion of three additional figures which effectively fills the gap, adds to the general interest and at the same time gives continuity to the mass moving forward through the Arch.⁵³

Bennett's government was now faced with an important decision. The government had no desire to significantly alter the style or commemorative function of the National War Memorial, nor did it want to delay the completion date of the bronze work. However, if more figures were to be added, the government now had to decide which, if any, additional branches of the Canadian Forces would be represented on the memorial.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ LAC, MG 26, K, vol. 815, M-1463, Sydney March to Bennett, January 25, 1933.

After March assured the government that he could complete these new figures within a few months time and at the same cost as the two additional figures that had been ordered in 1928, Bennett's government passed an Order in Council on April 18, 1933, approving the three new figures. With the document the government agreed to March's recommendation to have "additional units of the Canadian Forces represented in the group, in order to add to the general effect of the Memorial."⁵⁴ The Order in Council did not, however, specify what form these new figures would take. The following month, Ferguson wrote to Bennett to inform him of March's view on the matter, saying that March was of the opinion that "it would be desirable to make these figures Infantrymen, because of the large numbers of these in excess of any other unit that served in the late war."⁵⁵ The government quickly approved March's suggestion, bringing the total number of figures on the memorial to twenty-two.

Bennett's decision to include these three additional figures marked the completion of the alterations to Vernon March's design. In March's original submission the description of the bronze grouping on the memorial had been rather vague. He had said that the figures on the memorial would be comprised of seventeen members of the Infantry, Artillery, Air Force, Navy, Medical Corps, and Nursing Associations. Furthermore, he stated that "each figure would be historically correct in detail of uniform and equipment, and typical of the branch it is representing."⁵⁶ However, the small scale of his original model and the lack of clarity in his design description left many of the specifics regarding these individuals to be determined. After a lengthy correspondence

⁵⁴ LAC, MG 26, K, vol. 815, M-1463, *Order-in-Council*, April 18, 1933.

⁵⁵ LAC, MG 26, K, vol. 815, M-1463, Ferguson to Bennett, May 18, 1933.

⁵⁶ For references to March's original design, see LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "10,"n.d.

between the March brothers and Ottawa these details had been addressed; five additional figures were added, and the final form of the memorial determined.

In addition to the two horses at the centre of the monument and the eighteen-pounder artillery piece at the rear, the monument now contained twenty-two figures memorializing all branches of Canada's overseas forces and symbolizing the many roles that Canadians fulfilled during the Great War.⁵⁷ Included among those represented on the memorial were a Lewis Machine Gunner, the Motor Machine Gun Corps, a sailor from HMCS Stadacona, a pilot, an air mechanic, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, the Canadian Artillery Corps, the Canadian Engineers, the Canadian Forestry Corps, the Canadian Railway Troops, the Canadian Army Service Corps, the Canadian Corps of Signals, a dispatch rider, and a stretcher bearer. The monument would also depict two nurses from the Canadian Army Medical Corps and six infantrymen carrying various equipment, including rifles, Vickers machine guns, respirators to protect against chemical agents, and other items of the sixty pound "basic load" that every member of the infantry was required to carry.⁵⁸

The inclusive nature of the memorial did not end with the representation of each branch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The highly detailed nature of the figures also helped to promote this representative purpose with respect to gender and age. While twenty of the figures on the memorial were men, Vernon March also proposed the inclusion of two women. In his original 1925 design March called for two female nurses to be present in the memorial as an acknowledgement of their service and sacrifices. In

⁵⁷ According to a Department of Veterans Affairs publication produced for the rededication of the memorial in 1982, "All branches of the service engaged in the war are represented" in the monument. See John Gardam, *The National War Memorial* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1982), 16.

⁵⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, all information pertaining to the specific details of the figures can be found in *ibid.*

the past, women's role in national commemorations had been largely relegated to allegorical figures.⁵⁹ However, monuments to women were increasingly built after the war, including the 1926 Nursing Sister's Memorial in Parliament's Hall of Honour. In the National War Memorial the two figures of women were carried forward in the final design. There was also an effort to include soldiers of a variety of ages. Some characters, such as the Lewis machine gunner, were deliberately made to appear older than the others, while one of the infantrymen in the middle of the grouping was created to possess a more youthful appearance. The recognition of the gender and age of the figures on the memorial ties into what Denise Thomson has referred to as "the equality of war dead."⁶⁰ She argues that interwar commemoration in Canada developed a sense that all participants should be commemorated including officers, enlisted men, women, and anyone else who made sacrifices during the war. A similar argument is made by Robert Shipley, who states that "equality was the general rule" for commemorations of this period.⁶¹

The extent that the creators of the memorial took into account other aspects of Canada's overseas forces is unclear. There is a kilted infantryman at the front-right of the bronze grouping, and the presence of the kilt may symbolize the Scottish ancestry of many Canadians, although a number of regiments wore kilts as their standard uniforms. In addition to the Scots, a 1982 publication on the memorial by Veterans Affairs Canada suggests that one of the infantrymen may represent one of the 3,500 aboriginal Canadians

⁵⁹ Nuala Johnson, "Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography, and Nationalism," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13, no.1 (1995): 57.

⁶⁰ Denise Thomson, "National Sorrow, National Pride: Commemoration of War in Canada, 1918-1945," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 4 (Winter 1995/1996): 25.

⁶¹ Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place: a History of Canadian War Memorials* (Toronto: NC Press, 1987), 120.

who served overseas.⁶² It is more likely, however, that this is not the case. Documentary evidence from the period does not support this claim. Nor was any distinction made between English and French Canadians on the monument. One element that distinguished March's original design from the other six finalists was his lack of acknowledgement of the varying regions of and demographic groups within the country. Instead, the figures passing through the arch, although highly detailed, could have come from any part of Canadian society. The conscious decision to represent soldiers of varying backgrounds reflected the staple objective of being broadly representational and incorporating the many different segments of Canadian society that fought overseas, without calling attention to the segmented nature of Canada. The highly accurate yet indistinct nature of the figures struck a balance between the desire that people everywhere could identify with the memorial while, at the same time, not excluding anyone.

With the alterations to March's original design complete, the only issue left to be resolved was the final site of the memorial. This issue had been a dominant one during King's term. However, given the financial strain caused by the economic depression, little if any progress was made towards readying the site during Bennett's time in office. Despite this inactivity, King remained vigilant in his efforts to ensure that the memorial would eventually be erected at Connaught Place. As evidenced by his diary entry from February 16, 1934, King believed that the Prime Minister and other Members of Parliament such as Cabinet Minister George Halsey Perley wanted the memorial located elsewhere.⁶³ Now serving as the Leader of the Opposition, King took the opportunity to advocate for Connaught Place the following week when the government announced a

⁶² Gardam, *The National War Memorial*, 28.

⁶³ WLMK Diary, February 16, 1934.

number of Public Works expenditures. While presenting his case before the House, King cited the original *Conditions of Open Competition*, the requirements that had been explained to the Board of Assessors when they selected the winning entry, the March brothers' support for the site, and the fact that the unique characteristics of Connaught Place had been taken into account when Vernon March first created his design.⁶⁴ Furthermore, King went so far as to suggest that any change to the location of the memorial might result in a breach of contract with the March brothers and all the other individuals and firms that had submitted entries to the competition in 1925.⁶⁵

King's suspicion of the Bennett government's intentions was without merit. At no point during his tenure as Prime Minister did Bennett suggest that the location of the memorial be changed, although no significant effort was made to ready the site. Progress on the scheme became so sluggish that Sydney March wrote to Canada House in London to request updates on the project. In his letter to Vanier in April 1934, Sydney reported that, despite the government's recent announcement that it was uncertain when the work would be completed, he was pleased to announce that all of the twenty-two bronze figures were finished and were ready for delivery. Doubtless anticipating further lengthy delays still to come, he concluded his letter by stating "I think that it is better for the bronze to remain in my care until the masonry is ready to receive them."⁶⁶

Because of the significant domestic problems with which he was dealing and the fact that he did not have the same personal attachment to project as King, Bennett's involvement in the War Memorial project was limited. Nonetheless, the decisions he

⁶⁴ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Fifth Session—Seventeenth Parliament, vol. I (February 22, 1934), 864-867.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ LAC, RG 25, vol. 338, Sydney March to Vanier, April 27, 1934.

made were important to the overall development of the monument. Bennett may not have been an innovator with regard to the National War Memorial; however, he never significantly diverged from the messages and ideas imbedded in the memorial project by King's government.

In October 1935 the Liberal government returned to office and King quickly engaged in efforts to bring about the completion of the memorial. Despite his best efforts, problems with the expropriation of the necessary buildings and concerns about traffic congestion around the site continued to stall the project. Throughout 1936 and into 1937 debate over the final location of the monument continued, with uncertainty expressed or outright rejection of the site advocated by many members of the public, journalistic community, social commentators, Mayor J.E. Stanley Lewis, the OTPC, and the Federal District Commission (FDC), forerunner to the present day National Capital Commission.⁶⁷ The infighting between the various groups involved in the redevelopment of the capital became so heated that organizations like the OTPC began passing resolutions stating that it would be illegal for the government unilaterally to move

⁶⁷ Evidence of widespread uncertainty or outright disapproval of the site during this period can be found in a number of newspaper clippings contained in the fonds of the Federal District Commission pertaining to the National War Memorial. See LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, Henry F. Ballantyne, "Confederation Park Area: Study of the Development of Streets and Driveways," 1936; LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, "Vimy Ridge and Kingsmere Ridge," *Ottawa Citizen*, August 6, 1936; LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, "Site of Memorial," *Ottawa Journal*, August 21, 1936; LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, "Plan to Erect War Memorial in Coming Year," *Ottawa Citizen*, November 13, 1936; LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, "Traffic Angle of Memorial Site is Being Considered," *Ottawa Citizen*, December 12, 1936; LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, "Park Plans are Discussed: Federal District Commission Seeks Information," *Ottawa Journal*, December 12, 1936; LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, "Objects to Site War Memorial: R.G. Pushman Suggests Green Island," *Ottawa Journal*, January 26, 1937; LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, "Not in Favour of Connaught Place as Memorial Site," *Ottawa Citizen*, January 26, 1937; and LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, "Memorial and Connaught Place," *Ottawa Citizen*, January 27, 1937.

forward with their plans for Connaught Place without the consent of associated agencies.⁶⁸

A solution to ongoing redevelopment problems presented itself in the spring of 1937. During King's visit to Europe for the 1937 Imperial Conference the Prime Minister attended the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, otherwise known as the Paris World Exposition. The chief architect of the event was the internationally respected architect and urban designer Jacques Gréber. Aware of the need to resolve the redevelopment problems of the capital, King approached Gréber about the possibility of his involvement in the project. The two men immediately established a good relationship and agreed to work together on the project.⁶⁹ On July 2, 1937 Gréber submitted his preliminary report for the development of the City of Ottawa, with a main element of the report addressing the site for the National War Memorial.⁷⁰ The initial report was not, however, what the Prime Minister had hoped for. In discussing possible sites for the monument, Gréber predicated his recommendation on the following understanding of memorials:

A War Memorial is really a shrine, and needs a quiet approach for delegations, speeches and memorial functions. If it is surrounded by the noise of vehicular traffic, even if the size of the plot is sufficient for being treated as a garden, the place is never dignified enough for the purpose of the monument.⁷¹

⁶⁸ By the early 1930s, Connaught Place and the surrounding buildings had become the property of the federal government. However, because of the jurisdiction that had been granted to organizations like the FDC and OTPC by the federal government, King's government was unable unilaterally to move forward with the development of the site without the support of those groups responsible for the redevelopment and beautification of the capital. For the resolution passed by the OTPC, see LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, [Untitled Resolution], Ottawa Town Planning Commission, January 29, 1937.

⁶⁹ David L.A. Gordon, *Planning Twentieth-Century Capital Cities* (London: Routledge, 2006), 155.

⁷⁰ Reference to King's request for a preliminary report addressing those matters deemed most urgent can be found in a letter accompanying Gréber's official report. See LAC, MG 26, J4, vol. 199, C-4277, Gréber to WLMK, July 2, 1937.

⁷¹ LAC, MG 26, J4, vol. 199, C-4277, "Consultation on Development of Government Grounds," July 2, 1937, 6.

For this reason, Gréber wrote that he and his associates “very strongly recommend, for the location of the War Monument, the centre of Major’s Hill Park.”⁷²

Following the public release of the preliminary report, the media in Ottawa wrote a series of articles about Gréber’s recommendations, with a number of journalists in favour of finding an alternative site. The criticism that emerged tended to focus on two main themes. The first related to whether or not the open plaza at Connaught place was an appropriate location for a war memorial. An article appearing in the *Ottawa Journal* stated that the paper had opposed Connaught Place as the site of the memorial since its first announcement, instead favouring a quiet setting in one of the city’s parks.⁷³ The *Ottawa Citizen* expressed a similar view, emphasising the importance of a peaceful setting in which people could quietly reflect on the memorial and its meaning.⁷⁴ The remainder of the criticism tended to focus on the potential traffic problems that would result from the selection of Connaught Place.⁷⁵ Those who opposed the site for this reason argued that a large monument at the centre of a new downtown plaza would cause congestion and make it difficult for vehicles to travel through the area.

Despite a number of people advocating for Major’s Hill Park, King was very quick to repudiate the site Gréber had recommended in his report. In an article in the *Ottawa Journal* the Prime Minister stated that, while “during the summer months the surroundings in the park were ideal for the memorial,” the park would not be nearly as

⁷² In Gréber’s preliminary report, Major’s Hill Park is misspelled as “Major Hill Park” but the reference has been corrected for the sake of clarity. For Gréber’s statement regarding this site see *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷³ LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, “Finding a Site for the National Memorial,” *Ottawa Journal*, July 16, 1937.

⁷⁴ LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, “Major’s Hill Park Considered for Site for National War Memorial,” *Ottawa Citizen*, July 16, 1937.

⁷⁵ For examples of critiques that referenced concerns over traffic congestion, see LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, “Ready to Cooperate on Site for Memorial, Discuss City Hall Location,” *Ottawa Citizen*, July 15, 1937; LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, “Expert Picks Park as Site For Memorial: Jacques Gréber, French Authority on Planning, Sends Interim Report to Ottawa,” *Ottawa Journal*, July 26, 1937; and LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, “National Memorial Places,” *Ottawa Citizen*, July 28, 1937.

idyllic in the winter months.⁷⁶ King was able to bring Gréber on side with his plan. After meeting with him on several occasions, King wrote in his diary that Gréber now understood that there was no alternative to Connaught Place and that he had almost completed a draft of his initial plans for the site.⁷⁷ For several years there had been talk of redeveloping the area around Connaught Place and creating a grand plaza to be known as Confederation Square.⁷⁸ Now aware that King was unbending in his support for this improvement, Gréber began efforts to plan a plaza.

King and Gréber met with the FDC at the residence of the organization's chairman, Frederic Bronson, in mid-August. At the meeting Gréber presented drafts of his plans for the development of Confederation Square; to the great pleasure of King, the members of the FDC were in agreement.⁷⁹ Since the beginning, the government had stated that the memorial would be located at Connaught Place. However, it had been very difficult for King to build consensus on this issue. Dating back to 1923, several possible locations for the National War Memorial had been recommended. Included among the sites that were regularly suggested were Parliament Hill, Confederation Park, Green Island, Major's Hill Park, a section of the Experimental Farm to be renamed Flanders Field, Nepean Point, Kingsmere Ridge, Merivale Road, and a variety of other locations

⁷⁶ LAC, RG 34, vol. 228, "Winter Problem with Memorial in Major's Hill Park," *Ottawa Journal*, July 27, 1937.

⁷⁷ WLMK Diary, August 11, 1937.

⁷⁸ The title Confederation Square first appeared in 1915 in the American architect Edward Bennett's Federal Plan Commission Report. Commissioned to provide plans for major improvements to Ottawa's downtown core, Bennett suggested the creation of a large open space to address the congestion problems around Connaught Place. A number of subsequent redevelopment schemes used the name Confederation Square to refer to a plaza in the area that was occupied by Connaught Place, just as Bennett himself had done. See David L.A. Gordon and Brian S. Osborne, "Constructing National Identity in Canada's Capital, 1900-2000: Confederation Square and the National War Memorial," *Journal of Historical Geography* 30, no. 4 (October 2004): 624.

⁷⁹ WLMK Diary, August 12, 1937.

west of the Parliament Buildings.⁸⁰ Yet King's government was now able to secure the site they had proposed at the time of their initial announcement of the project in March 1923. Connaught Place would become Confederation Square and would feature a large triangular plaza with the memorial at the centre. Having gained the necessary support for the selected site, Gréber completed his plans to prepare for the construction of Confederation Square.

During the closing months of 1937, plans were initiated to complete the now long delayed memorial. In December 1937, the Montreal based E.G.M. Cape and Company was awarded the contract to construct the monument's granite pedestal and arch, with the granite originating from the Dumas Quarry near Rivière-à-Pierre in Quebec.⁸¹ Work began on the memorial the following year. No delay was caused by the sculptors. The bronze figures had already been shipped to Ottawa during the summer, accompanied by Sydney March and his brothers Percival and Walter.⁸² In order to ensure that the sculptor's original vision was maintained, Sydney March and his two brothers supervised the building of the memorial and directed the construction firm.⁸³ By the summer of 1938 the surrounding buildings had been removed, the concrete foundation of the memorial was completed, and construction of the memorial itself had begun. It was at this time that the Prime Minister began to give serious consideration to the ceremony for the official

⁸⁰ This list of sites was compiled for the Prime Minister by J.B. Hunter in the summer of 1937. Although Parliament Hill was not on his list, it has been included because it was one of the most commonly suggested sites during the early years of the project. See LAC, MG 26, J4, vol. 199, "List (Supplied by Mr. Hunter) of Sites Which Have Been Suggested for the War Memorial," July 30, 1937.

⁸¹ Gardam, *The National War Memorial*, 8.

⁸² The March brothers and their bronze figures were in Ottawa because it had initially been planned to temporarily erect the memorial in the Capital, similar to what was done in Hyde Park a few years earlier. However, with the rapid progress on the project in the fall and winter of 1937, it was deemed unnecessary to build a temporary memorial since it would have to be torn down shortly thereafter. For discussions relating to the arrival of the bronze figures and the proposed temporary unveiling, see LAC, RG 25, vol. 338, T.D. Rankin to Vanier, May 17, 1937; and LAC, RG 34, v. 228, "Sculptors Arrive to Start Assembly of War Memorial," *Ottawa Citizen*, July 10, 1937.

⁸³ Gardam, *The National War Memorial*, 8, 19.

unveiling of the National War Memorial. In his diary entry from July 31, 1938, King wrote that some people were suggesting that the Canadian Forces take the lead in unveiling the memorial. While they would indeed play an important role, King had another idea. "What I have in mind" he wrote, "is, if there is a chance, as I believe there is, for the King and Queen visiting Canada next year, to reserve that ceremony for the King."⁸⁴ King was granted his wish. King George VI would travel to Canada and unveil the memorial in the spring of the following year. The 1939 Royal Tour by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth held added significance because it was the first time a reigning monarch would visit Canada.

The development of Confederation Square and the assembly of the memorial moved steadily along, with only a few minor concerns being raised. In August the Veterans' Re-establishment Association sent a letter to the Prime Minister inquiring why qualified veterans were not employed in the construction of the monument.⁸⁵ This issue, however, quickly evaporated after the Chief Architect of Public Works, C.D. Sutherland, was informed by the E.G.M. Cape and Company President, T.A. Somerville, that a third of the men working on the memorial were returned veterans of the Great War.⁸⁶ The only other problem that emerged concerned the symbolic meaning of the allegorical figures at the top of the memorial. In the original design description, Vernon March explained that the two emblematic figures "shall express that they are alighting on the World with the blessings of Victory, Peace and Liberty in the footsteps of the peoples [sic] heroism and self sacrifice who are passing through the archway below."⁸⁷ However, since the

⁸⁴ WLMK Diary, July 31, 1938.

⁸⁵ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 256, C-3737, Veterans' Re-Establishment Association to WLMK, August 6, 1938.

⁸⁶ LAC, MG 26, J1, vol. 248, C-3733, T.A. Somerville to C.D. Sutherland, August 17, 1938.

⁸⁷ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, "10," n.d.

competition the figures had interchangeably been referred to as either *Peace and Liberty* or *Peace and Freedom*.⁸⁸ When speaking to journalists about the meaning of these two figures, King stated that they represented *Peace and Freedom*, explaining that freedom suggests “a condition enjoyed...whereas liberty is more something that has been acquired.” He went on to state that, while liberty is more associated with American history, freedom “carries peculiar aptness concerning the British people. We have enjoyed and preserved freedom.”

By October 1938 the bronze figures had been mounted and the masonry work on the memorial was completed. Gréber, who was still working as a consultant for the development of Confederation Square, oversaw the remaining work for the site, including the landscaping and the building of the memorial’s approaches. Although the monument was nearly ready to be unveiled, 1938 brought another Armistice Day without the National War Memorial.⁸⁹ However, King saw the timing of the memorial’s completion as serendipitous. “Somehow,” he wrote, “I still believe that this memorial will be all the better for having been erected in this particular year and that the figures of Peace and Victory will have a greater significance than they would have had the monument been erected at any earlier time.”⁹⁰ Because of the increasingly worrying situation in Europe, King believed that the timing of the memorial was appropriate, reminding Canadians of

⁸⁸ While rare, there are a few instances where the allegorical figures were referred to as *Peace and Freedom* in the early stages of the project.

⁸⁹ As the National War Memorial project suffered increasing delays, the government began erecting a cenotaph each Remembrance Day on Parliament Hill. Although small in stature and simple in design, the memorial served as the site for Remembrance Day ceremonies while the public awaited the completion of the National War Memorial. For reference to this temporary memorial, see Thomas Wayling, “In Remembrance: The Story of the Legion’s National Remembrance Day Service,” *The Legionary*, November 1931, 7.

⁹⁰ It is unclear why the Prime Minister referred to the two figures as *Peace and Victory* after having recently explained to the public that they represented *Peace and Freedom*. While Vernon March had originally referenced “victory” when explaining the meaning of the figures, the government did not describe the figures in this way. For King’s discussion of these figures, see WLMK Diary, September 23, 1938.

the importance of maintaining peace and the human cost of war. When the two allegorical figures were mounted on the memorial on the same day as the signing of the Munich Agreement that ceded the Czech Sudetenland to Germany, he again reflected on the connection with events in Europe: “Canada will remember throughout her history, that these two symbolical figures found their place at the top of the National Memorial on September the 30th, the day of the signing of the 4-power agreement which averted another Great War.”⁹¹

The official unveiling of the memorial was held at eleven o’clock on May 21, 1939. The crowd in attendance was impressive in scope and included roughly 12,000 veterans of the Great War, and an estimated 100,000 members of the public. The ceremonies incorporated many of the themes and messages that advanced the broadly representational and distinctly Canadian nature of the monument, which were the central features of the National War Memorial project. Among the most notable ways in which these messages were presented was through the large banners that surrounded the monument. Mounted on thirty-six foot poles, the twenty banners were designed to represent the many segments of Canadian society and the nation’s ancestral roots: the Royal Lions of England, representative of English Canada; the fleurs-de-lis to represent French Canada; a red lion rampant on a yellow background to signify the country’s Scottish heritage; a harp with a blue background to honour Irish Canadians; three banners portraying the crosses of St. Andrew, St. Patrick, and St. George, representative of Scotland, Ireland, and England respectively; a Canadian banner depicting green maple leaves on a white background; and two banners with the monograms of King George VI

⁹¹ Signed on 30 September 1938, the Munich Agreement was an accord between Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom that ceded the Czech Sudetenland to Nazi Germany. For King’s statement about the Munich Agreement, see WLMK Diary, September 30, 1938.

and Queen Elizabeth.⁹² While clearly not representing every Canadian, the government sought to use these elements to form a connection between the memorial and broader Canadian society.

The central features of the inaugural ceremony were the unveiling of the monument followed by the King's dedicatory address. After being invited to speak to those in attendance by the Prime Minister, King George VI stepped forward to the podium, signalling ten guardsmen who were carrying large banners covering the bronze grouping on the memorial to step down from the structure to show Canada's National War Memorial.⁹³ The King then addressed the crowd. "It is my privilege as your King" he stated "to unveil today in your Capital City the noble memorial to Canada's spirit and sacrifice in the Great War."⁹⁴ During his speech, George VI reflected on the pain and suffering the country endured because of its contribution to the war effort:

To win peace and to secure freedom Canada's sons and daughters enrolled for service during the Great War. For the cause of peace and freedom 60,000 Canadians gave their lives, and a still larger number suffered impairment of body or mind. This sacrifice the National Memorial holds in remembrance for our own and succeeding generations.

The King then went on to explain that "This memorial...does more than commemorate a great event in the past. It has a message for all generations and for all countries — the message which called for Canada's response." The key part of his address came when George VI explained the monument's didactic purpose:

⁹² The banners were located on both sides of the memorial, with each of the ten distinct banners present on either side. See "Royal Unveiling of National Memorial," *The Legionary*, May 1939, 11.

⁹³ LAC, RG 24, vol. 6429, *Detailed Order of Ceremony for the Unveiling of the National War Memorial by His Majesty the King*, May 13, 1939.

⁹⁴ A copy of King George VI's speech at the unveiling of the memorial is contained in the memorandum on the National War Memorial compiled by the Historical Section of the Department of National Defence. For references to the King's speech, see LAC, RG 24, vol. 1752, *The National War Memorial*, June 26, 1943, 2.

The memorial speaks to her world of Canada's heart. Its symbolism has been beautifully adapted to this great end. It has been well named 'The Response'.⁹⁵ One sees at a glance the answer made by Canada when the world's peace was broken and freedom threatened in the fateful years of the Great War. It depicts the zeal with which this country entered the conflict.

But the symbolism of the memorial is even more profound. Something deeper than chivalry is portrayed. It is the spontaneous response of the nation's conscience. The very soul of the nation is here revealed.

It was unsurprising that George VI spoke of the monument's broader commemorative purpose. The Prime Minister, after all, was responsible for the writing of the King's address. In the months leading up to the unveiling, King reflected in his diary about his involvement in the writing of King George VI's speech. "Little did I dream," he wrote, "that the speech which I would write would be one for the King himself to deliver."⁹⁶ Although King George VI made the address, it was the Prime Minister, the man who had been involved in nearly all aspects of the memorial's creation, who explained the role and meaning of *The Response* at its unveiling.⁹⁷

It is important to note that King George VI's presence at the unveiling of the memorial in no way detracted from the emphasis throughout the project on the distinctly Canadian character of the monument. Indeed, his presence reaffirmed a vital component of Canadian tradition. Historian Phillip Buckner has rightly argued that the majority of English speaking Canadians continued to recognize the strong connections between the

⁹⁵ In March's original design, he referred to his memorial as the "Great Response." In the years that followed, people referred to the memorial as either the "Great Response" or simply "The Response." Reference to the monument as the National War Memorial followed a similar path. Initially the government referred to the memorial as the National Commemorative War Monument; however, it increasingly became referred to as the National War Memorial. Shortly before the monument was unveiled, King had stated that he would prefer it if the word "war" was dropped from the monument's title, but it was eventually decided to keep it in the title. At the unveiling ceremony, the memorial was referred to as both the National War Memorial and *The Response*, both of which are now considered to be its proper name.

⁹⁶ WLMK Diary, February 27, 1939.

⁹⁷ Gordon and Osborne's study on the development of the site for the memorial suggests that the Prime Minister merely prompted the King to speak about the memorial's symbolic role. However, because they do not provide references to support this claim, and because I have been unable to locate any other information to suggest otherwise, it is very likely that the Prime Minister was responsible for the writing of the King George VI's address. See Gordon and Osborne, "Constructing National Identity," 624.

two nations.⁹⁸ The inclusion of King George VI at the unveiling ceremony mirrored the familial relations between the countries. While those creating the memorial sought to focus on Canada's war effort as separate from Britain's, they did not reject Canada's British heritage — quite the contrary. The monument was a declaration of Canada's achievements, not a denial of its British past.

Over thirteen years had passed between the selection of Vernon March's design and the unveiling of the *The Response*. While many monuments faced delays during this period, the National War Memorial encountered more delays than almost any other commemorative effort of the period.⁹⁹ Yet, despite its slow pace of development, the creators of the memorial continued their efforts to bring the project to completion. Discounting the debates over the site of the monument, there was never any strong opposition to the commemorative aim of the memorial established in the projects' infancy. Vance has explained the unity that characterized memorialization during the interwar years. "The answer" he states "lay in the virtual unanimity, love, and gratitude, on the meaning of a memorial and the necessity of erecting one."¹⁰⁰ Vance argues that "The raising of a monument was an act of devotion, love, and gratitude, but it was also a test for the living; their response to the challenge of memorialization demonstrated their fidelity to the legacy of the fallen."¹⁰¹ The National War Memorial was a commemoration of the service and sacrifices made by Canadians overseas. It enjoyed widespread approval among veterans, politicians, and citizens from creation to realization.

⁹⁸ Phillip Buckner, *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 4-5.

⁹⁹ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 207.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

The significance of the memorial was not limited to a commemoration of the country's armed forces. The monument was also imbued with ideas that spoke to the nature of Canadian society in the interwar period. From the beginning, *The Response* was intended to possess a uniquely Canadian character. King had advocated strongly for an emphasis on those features with a "distinctfully" Canadian quality and this was maintained throughout the creation of the memorial. From the first announcement of the project through the alterations to the monument's design to its final unveiling, the National War Memorial was consistently described and presented as a Canadian memorial, focussing on the achievements of Canada to the exclusion of all others. The presence of national meanings built into the monument that transcended mere glorifications of the dead and recognitions of the service of the country's veterans did not uniquely distinguish this monument from other commemorative initiatives. Indeed, this trend is characteristic of many national commemorative efforts. "Monuments," Shipley has illustrated, "carry a number of meanings with none ringing more clearly than the sense of pride in a country."¹⁰² Nevertheless, the theme of the national was prevalent for the entire period of the memorial's realization. This also helps to understand why there was such a strong emphasis by King's government on maintaining the original site. In insisting on Connaught Place, King almost always returned to the idea that it was the most visible location in the capital, accessible to the largest number of people. He fought hard for this site because it was the most effective place to present a distinctly Canadian message to the public.

There was one final meaning built into *The Response* that was emphasised throughout its creation. Dating back to early discussions on the memorial, the monument

¹⁰² Shipley, *To Mark Our Place*, 111.

was described as needing to possess and convey a broadly representational character. Those responsible for creating the memorial ensured that this objective was fulfilled. The decision to do so was not without precedent. Shipley argues that interwar commemoration was concerned with being widely relatable.¹⁰³ Moreover, he states that only a few of the memorials built in Canada following the Great War were in the form of individual portraits. In those instances when a monument depicted a single soldier, they were typically referred to as *The Volunteer* and were intended to memorialize “not just him but all those from the community who fell.”¹⁰⁴ Every region in the country had made sacrifices during the Great War; the National War Memorial was intended to represent all Canadians. To accomplish this, the monument had to present a somewhat distorted portrait of Canada. By presenting an artificially unified vision of the country and its people, the monument and its creators neglected the many geographic, social, and cultural divisions that existed in Canadian society and had been exhibited during the war. However, as Angus Calder has explained, memorials must often ignore contradictions in society, “inventing unity where there is diversity.”¹⁰⁵ Electing to ignore the various regions and divisions of the country, the creators of the National War Memorial carried forward their desire for a broadly representational commemoration.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Angus Calder, “The Scottish National War Memorial,” in *Memory and Memorials: the Commemorative Century*, ed. William Kidd and Brian Murdoch (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004), 63.

CHAPTER THREE – 'A Memorial to All Canadians': The National Shrine of Remembrance and the Remaking of the National War Memorial

The unveiling of *The Response* in May 1939 marked the end of years of planning and execution. Canada now possessed a monument of a national character that memorialized the service and sacrifice of its overseas forces during the First World War. However, in the years that followed the completion of the project, the country was brought into other global conflicts, leading to proposals to determine an appropriate means of commemorating Canadians' continued involvement in overseas wars. The most notable of these initiatives was the National Shrine of Remembrance, which was intended to commemorate Canadians' sacrifice across all of Canada's past, present, and future wars. Yet such initiatives never came to fruition. Each of the attempts to establish new commemorative sites in the capital was abandoned. The reason behind the failures of these memorials can be attributed to the shifting role and purpose of the National War Memorial. *The Response* had been created with an express purpose in mind, but in the years that followed its unveiling its didactic messages evolved. The National War Memorial came to encompass more than its creators had originally conceived of or intended, rendering many subsequent commemorative initiatives unnecessary in the eyes of Canadians.

As had been the case with Canada's memorial to the Great War, the first instance in which the government referenced the need to commemorate the Second World War occurred before the conflict had even concluded. While speaking to the House of Commons about the transfer of payments between the federal government and the municipal government of Ottawa in April 1944, Prime Minister Mackenzie King took the

opportunity to explain his plans for the continued development of the capital and its expanding role in national commemoration. King explained that the participation of Canadians in the Great War had been sufficiently memorialized by the National War Memorial: “It would be difficult, if not impossible,” he argued, “to create another memorial which could pay due tribute to the service and sacrifice of those men and women of Canada who will have served in the present world conflict.”¹ Instead, the Prime Minister proposed that a carefully planned and redeveloped capital region serve as a memorial to the Second World War. By making the city itself a memorial to Canadians of the present war, the redesigned capital “would be not only the pride of Canadians but also an object lesson to other cities and to other countries.”² King’s government again addressed this issue less than a week after the official end of the Second World War during the Speech from the Throne of the Twentieth Parliament on September 6, 1945. The Governor General, the Earl of Athlone, explained that the government intended to use the “development and beautification of the national capital and its surrounding area as a national memorial” for the country’s most recent veterans and war dead.³ By war’s end, the government had determined that no further national monuments were needed in the capital to commemorate the country’s war dead.

King’s new vision for the commemorative role of the capital was carried throughout Jacques Gréber’s ongoing redevelopment plans in the years following the Second World War. While there had initially been no intention to build an additional national memorial in the city, calls from veterans’ groups quickly made it apparent that

¹ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Fifth Session—Nineteenth Parliament, vol. III (April 21, 1944), 2237-2238.

² *Ibid.*

³ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, First Session—Twentieth Parliament, vol. I (September 6, 1945), 9.

they desired a more traditional form of commemoration to honour the soldiers of the Second World War. In order to accommodate their wishes, a plan was devised by Gréber in 1947 that incorporated a new memorial in the capital region. The architect proposed that a monument be built on the southern edge of the Gatineau Hills that would be reminiscent of Canada's Vimy Ridge Memorial in France and easily visible from the Ottawa downtown area.⁴ However, objections were registered against this site because of the logistical problems associated with directing tourists towards it; veterans' groups were also opposed.⁵ As a temporary solution to the problem, Gréber proposed that the dates *1939-1945* be inscribed on the base of the National War Memorial. Again, veterans' groups remained steadfast in their belief that *The Response* must retain its association with the Great War and that a new memorial was needed for Canadians' most recent service and sacrifice.

Because of the uncertainty surrounding this issue, all plans for the commemoration of the recent global conflict came to a standstill. The retirement of Prime Minister King in 1948 also meant that there was less enthusiasm to begin work on the redevelopment of the capital. Until his death in the summer of 1950, King supported Gréber's plans for the city that grew from the former Prime Minister's vision of a capital region. Without King as the driving force spurring the project forward, however, Canada entered another war in Korea with no official commemoration of Canada's post Great War soldiers.

⁴ David L.A. Gordon and Brian S. Osborne, "Constructing National Identity in Canada's Capital, 1900-2000: Confederation Square and the National War Memorial," *Journal of Historical Geography* 30, no. 4 (October 2004): 634.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 635.

The Royal Canadian Legion was concerned over the lack of memorialization of the service and sacrifice of the soldiers of the Second World War and the Korean War. In the 1940s and early 1950s Canada had played significant roles in these conflicts. During the Second World War (1939-1945), over 1,000,000 men and women served in the various branches of the armed forces and, while fewer than the Great War, roughly 42,000 Canadians were lost. Shortly thereafter, the country became involved in the Korean War (1950-1953), which took the lives of a further 516 Canadians.

Before the end of the Korean War, the federal government decided that the two Veterans Memorial Buildings, then in the process of being built, would act as a commemoration of those who served in the Second World War. An arch was placed between the buildings, connecting the two, with an inscription that read: "All these were honoured in their generations and were the glory of their times."⁶ However, many veterans' organisations did not feel that the buildings adequately memorialized the efforts of Canadian servicemen and women during the conflict.⁷ The Legion argued that Canadians wanted a more appropriate, and perhaps more traditional, form of commemoration. Yet despite its calls for action, there was little discussion among politicians and no government policy enacted to build a new monument. The National War Memorial and the Veterans Memorial Buildings, completed in 1956, were deemed by the government to satisfy this need.

Legion members took it upon themselves to press the government into action. On November 10, 1955 the Legion presented the Cabinet with a brief that called for the

⁶ Susan LeMaistre, *Memorials to Canada's War Dead* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1986), 11.

⁷ Though the Veterans Memorial Buildings were built to commemorate the Second World War, throughout the 1950s and 1960s the Legion repeatedly stated that the veterans of this conflict did not have a memorial dedicated to their service. It is clear that the Legion did not view the arch as a suitable monument to the men and women who were involved in the Second World War.

creation of a National Cenotaph to be constructed in Ottawa to honour fallen Canadians of all wars.⁸ “It is a sacred duty for all Canadians,” the Legion argued, “to remember solemnly and reverently that great host of gallant men and women who laid down their lives in the service of this country.” The Legion went on to suggest that, while it was not in favour of wasteful spending on memorials when they were not necessary, the organization was justified in its call for the expenditure of public funds to build monuments to fallen Canadian soldiers and the country’s war veterans. The Legion argued that the National War Memorial did not adequately memorialize the service of all Canadians. Furthermore, the Legion stipulated that family members of those who died in the country’s recent wars had “expressed surprise and disappointment that the memory of *their* dead [had] not yet been commemorated visually by the nation.”⁹ The main problem that the Legion identified with using *The Response* as a memorial of all wars was the accuracy and specificity with which the monument depicted Canadian soldiers of the First World War. The government had been very careful in its construction of *The Response* to ensure that the monument truthfully depicted soldiers of 1914-1918, but that meant that “the heroic figures of our present National War Memorial portray Canada’s fighting men of the First World War so faithfully as to render it unsuitable as a memorial to our fallen in World War II and the Korean War.” Because of what the Legion perceived to be a widespread disappointment with the commemoration of conflicts other than the First World War, it believed that a new monument was urgently necessary in the capital.

⁸ The brief that the Canadian Legion presented to the Cabinet is reproduced in its entirety in an article that appeared in the December 1955 issue of *The Legionary*. For this article and other information presented in this paragraph, see “A National Cenotaph,” *The Legionary*, December 1955, 12.

⁹ Emphasis added by the original author.

In its brief to the Cabinet, the Legion also outlined the form that it wanted this new memorial to take in order to escape the inherent limitations that it believed were built into *The Response*. In instances where it was not possible to modify existing First World War memorials, the Legion had urged cities and municipalities to create cenotaphs modelled after Edwin Lutyen's iconic First World War memorial in London's Whitehall. While essentially a solid pillar of stone with only a few engravings, people responded to the simplicity and beauty of Lutyen's memorial and it subsequently became the inspiration for a number of Great War memorials across the country, including Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver.¹⁰ The Legion felt that this form of monument could also be utilised in the creation of a new national war memorial. It stated that "the solution to the current problem is a *National Cenotaph* which would honour our fallen of *all* wars."¹¹ Through incorporating a design that included symbolic features rather than literal depictions of events, the Legion believed that a new National Cenotaph would be a timeless memorial that would never become fixed to a certain temporal period, as it believed *The Response* was. To highlight the national significance of the monument, the Legion proposed that it be located on the grounds of Parliament Hill, directly in front of the Peace Tower and the Memorial Chamber.

In the months that followed the Legion's recommendations to the Cabinet, a handful of editorials appeared in *The Legionary* in which members expressed concern over the proposal. In a letter written to the magazine editor, W.N. Campbell asked what was to become of the Remembrance Day ceremonies at the existing memorial if the

¹⁰ Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place: a History of Canadian War Memorials* (Toronto: NC Press, 1987), 105; and Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 203.

¹¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the information presented in this paragraph has been taken from "A National Cenotaph," *The Legionary*, December 1955, 12; emphasis added by the original author.

National Cenotaph were to be created? The editor responded by saying that, while smaller services would still be held at the National War Memorial, “the official Remembrance Day services on November 11 will be held around [the new] memorial so that tribute may be paid, in the one ceremony, to the memory of Canada’s fallen in ALL wars.”¹² Despite concerns such as this, Legion members appear to have supported the proposal. The Legion had presented the government with a clear plan of what should be done to commemorate the service of those soldiers who had not yet been officially recognised. It was up to the government to determine what course of action, if any, should be taken.

When the Legion first approached the federal government with its proposal, plans for another form of commemoration in the capital were already underway. The Books of Remembrance in the Memorial Chamber contained the names of all the Canadians who gave their lives in the service of their country and had served as a memorial since their unveiling on August 3, 1927. In the years following the creation of the First World War Book of Remembrance and the altar upon which it was placed, the Memorial Chamber served as a memorial to the country’s Great War dead. However, by the mid 1950s plans were underway for three additional books to honour the country’s fallen: one commemorating the Second World War; another for the Korean War; and one book to recognize the sacrifice of the nearly 300 Canadians who lost their lives during the South African War and the Nile Expedition.¹³ Although it was eventually determined that the

¹² W.N. Campbell, “Letters to the Editor,” *The Legionary*, May 1956, 32.

¹³ Because of changes made to the abbreviations attached to members of the infantry and various regiments, much of the work on the Second World War Book of Remembrance had to be redone. This increase in work load significantly delayed completion of the Book.

Memorial Chamber could accommodate all seven of the Books of Remembrance, the government wondered if there was space for the three additional Books at the site.¹⁴

To resolve this ongoing issue, the Cabinet of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent authorized the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Hugues Lapointe, to establish a committee to examine the issue and to suggest possible solutions.¹⁵ Included among the members of the committee were the Chief Architect of the Department of Public Works, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Dominion Command of the Canadian Legion, and Alan Beddoe, who was responsible for creating the new Books of Remembrance.¹⁶ In 1954 the committee began to search for a new location for the Books. During the time in which the committee was assessing the situation, the recommendation from the Legion was presented to the Cabinet for the construction of a National Cenotaph on Parliament Hill. The advisory committee took the Legion's proposal into account when they compiled their final report. In 1956 they reported that none of the existing government buildings were, or could be altered to become, appropriate sites for the Books. The committee examined the viability of a number of possible sites, including the National Gallery, the National Library, and other areas in the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings. However, they concluded that none of these locations had "a suitably spacious room that would have the surroundings and atmosphere which would

¹⁴ At present, the Memorial Chamber houses the seven Books of Remembrance, which list the more than 118,000 Canadians in uniform who have sacrificed their lives in conflicts for the country since Confederation. The books include the First World War Book of Remembrance (1927), Second World War Book of Remembrance (1957), Korean War Book of Remembrance (1962), South African War/Nile Expedition Book of Remembrance (1962), Newfoundland Book of Remembrance (1973), Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance (1993), and the In Service of Canada Book of Remembrance (2005).

¹⁵ Explained in Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Fifth Session—Twenty Sixth Parliament, vol. VI (December 11, 1963), 5686.

¹⁶ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, Minister of Public Works and Minister of Veterans Affairs to Lester B. Pearson, July 8, 1963.

permit the Books to be examined in silence and in an attitude of reverence.”¹⁷ Instead, the committee recommended the creation of a shrine of remembrance on Nepean Point. They believed that this site could serve the dual purpose of housing the commemorative Books while, at the same time, providing ample space for the creation of a cenotaph that memorialized the service of Canadians in all wars.¹⁸

While the government publically announced that a new site was being considered for the Books of Remembrance, it did not respond to the Legion’s petition that a new national monument was necessary. Yet behind the scenes, the government actively examined plans for the future development of a memorial at Nepean Point. Almost immediately after the government’s announcement of their search for a new site for the Books, the architectural firms of Mathers and Haldenby of Toronto and Edouard Fiset of Quebec City were selected to examine the options available and to prepare plans for the memorial. Between 1956 and 1959 the firms produced detailed plans and a scale model of the proposed redevelopment of the site, which gained the approval of both the Cabinet and the newly formed National Capital Commission (NCC), which was responsible for federal development projects in the capital.¹⁹ Despite the early progress, financial concerns delayed the approval of the project. In the summer of 1961 the Treasury Board turned down the proposal because the estimated cost for the shrine had risen to \$2,225,000 from the projected original price of \$700,000.²⁰ To address these budgetary concerns, the NCC made alterations to the memorial’s design to lower the expected cost

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, First Session—Twenty Sixth Parliament, vol. VI (December 11, 1963), 5887.

¹⁹ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, Minister of Public Works and Minister of Veterans Affairs to Lester B. Pearson, July 8, 1963.

²⁰ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, G.G.E. Steele, “Proposed Shrine of Remembrance — Nepean Point,” July 18, 1963.

to \$1,500,000.²¹ Cabinet approved of these changes and the planning for the memorial was completed by the start of 1963.

Speaking to the press on February 19, 1963, the Public Works Minister, E. Davie Fulton, explained in detail what form the new memorial would take. He began by stating that the memorial would be built on Nepean Point because of the sight lines this setting offered for various locations around the capital. The plans called for a memorial with two principal features. The first was a cenotaph, similar to the one that the Legion had called for in 1955. This monument would serve as the focal point of future Remembrance Day ceremonies and other “services of a national character.” The second feature of the site would be a cruciform-shaped building that Minister Fulton called the National Shrine of Remembrance. This structure would house the Books of Remembrance for the Korean War, the Second World War, the South African War, and the Nile Expedition. The building would also have a copy of the First World War Book of Remembrance; the original would remain in the Memorial Chamber where it had been originally consecrated in 1927. While the building would serve an important commemorative function, it was not the government’s intention to hold ceremonies in the building. Rather, it was made clear that the shrine “represents, quite simply, a quiet and reverent tribute to those who laid down their lives for their country and for freedom.”²²

²¹ It is unclear what changes made to the memorial’s original design were responsible for lowering the estimated costs. Because the core elements of the design remained intact, the significant reduction in the cost of the project may have been associated with the proposed alterations to the access roads leading to the site. See *ibid.*

²² Much of the information presented in this paragraph is taken from a speech given by Public Works Minister E. Davie Fulton. For a transcript of the Minister’s speech and additional information on the proposed memorial, see John Hundevad, “Plans for National Memorial to All Canada’s Fallen are Announced,” *The Legionary*, April 1963, 13-14.

In his address to the media, Minister Fulton also explicitly stated why the John Diefenbaker government of which he was a part felt it was necessary to create another monument in the capital:

We have as you well know, several war memorials located here in the National Capital. The memorial in Confederation Square was erected to the memory of the fallen in the First World War. The Veterans Memorial Buildings on Wellington Street were raised in honour of our Second World War dead. There is a memorial arch between these two buildings and the base for statuary not yet erected. There is also a memorial to the South African War dead, and others to branches of the various armed services. We have not, however, a memorial to all Canadians who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of Canada in wars in which we have taken part as a nation. That is the purpose of the proposed new National War Memorial.²³

It is unclear why Minister Fulton referred to the newly proposed monument as the *National War Memorial*, given that this title had already been assigned to *The Response*.

It is possible that the government intended to change the official title of the existing National War Memorial or that it was simply a result of the government having yet to decide a formal title for the proposed monument at Nepean Point.

Based on Minister Fulton's remarks, it would appear that the government felt that the Korean and Second World Wars were not sufficiently represented in the city's commemorative landscape. Given that the Legion had initially advocated for the memorial's creation, and was part of the government's advisory committee, it would appear that the government shared the Legion's views on the country's national commemoration. The announcement of the plan also suggests that the government believed that there was a lack of clarity and unity in the city's war monuments. By creating a memorial that did not focus on a single conflict, it would become possible to commemorate soldiers of past, present, and future conflicts, which the Legion felt *The*

²³ *Ibid.*

Response was unable to do. The government clearly believed, as did the Legion, that a single monument, dedicated to all the country's wars, would create a place where Canadians could honour the collective service and sacrifice of all the country's armed forces and create a sense of coherency in the country's commemoration.

Minister Fulton announced that the new memorial would be completed and made open to the public in time for Canada's centennial celebrations in 1967. It is perhaps not surprising that the announcement of the memorial came when it did: on the previous day the National Centennial Administration (NCA) had announced many of the plans that were in development to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of Confederation. The chairman of the NCA, John Fisher, stated that a series of large programs was being undertaken as part of the centennial celebrations and suggested that they would be focussed on issues of a national character.²⁴ It is likely that the memorial was one of these initiatives to which he was referring. Beyond its importance in the context of the 1967 anniversary, the government's unveiling of the plan signified the culmination of ten years of work towards the establishment of a new memorial in the capital. During that time, both the governments of Louis St. Laurent and John Diefenbaker had demonstrated their support for the venture by continuing to move forward with the project. As noted in the April 1963 issue of *The Legionary*, the memorial had not become a political issue that the parties fought over. The initiative had gained broad bipartisan support from all the federal parties.²⁵

Yet while there was strong political support for the new memorial, the documentary evidence collected for this thesis shows that the reactions of Canadians

²⁴ Robin Green, "Plan Big for '67, Committee Told," *The Globe and Mail*, February 19, 1963.

²⁵ John Hundevad, "Plans for National Memorial to All Canada's Fallen are Announced," *The Legionary*, April 1963, 13-14.

towards the National Shrine of Remembrance were far from uniformly positive. The government's announcement of the project garnered praise from members of the Legion. However, within a few days of the official announcement of the project, and continuing over the course of the next year, the plan came under fire from a variety of sources. Members of the media, various organizations, veterans, and Canadians condemned the plan and opposed the creation of another memorial. The widespread criticism that emerged was as frequent as its reasoning was diverse. Ranging from concerns about expense to the belief that the memorial was unnecessary, a segment of Canadian society opposed the plan outright and called on the government to cease all efforts to move forward with the initiative.

The Pearson government, which took power in April 1963, appears to have been surprised by the flood of criticism that the memorial received. All parties had initially put their support behind the issue and a considerable amount of time and resources had been dedicated to creating a solid plan for the National Shrine of Remembrance. The Diefenbaker government had felt that it was bringing about an initiative that was both necessary and long overdue. Yet Canadians were telling the government that there was no gap in federal commemoration of the country's wars and that there was no need for another monument in the nation's capital. In addition, journalists, organizations, and concerned citizens voiced their opposition to the project in newspaper articles, editorials, letters to the editor, popular magazines, letters to politicians, and through formal resolutions. The government and the Legion struggled to understand why there was so much opposition to the plan. A year long debate took place that brought out the

difference between public and government-Legion conceptions about the need for another memorial.

The opposition to the creation of the National Shrine of Remembrance touched on a variety of issues that, critics believed, outweighed the benefits offered by the new memorial. One of the most often cited reasons for criticism was the financial cost that was associated with the project. Concerns relating to expense were not without precedent. In 1961 the Treasury Board had rejected a proposal because of budgetary concerns. With the alteration of the plans, it was now believed that the memorial would only cost the government \$1,500,000, a substantial sum but only a fraction of the roughly \$80,000,000 that the federal government had set aside for centennial projects deemed to be “of a national nature.”²⁶ However, as revealed through an internal study of the projected costs of the project in July 1963, there were many other expenses not accounted for in the original budget. The Secretary of the Treasury Board, G.G.E. Steele, reported to Cabinet that these additional expenses, which included the demolition of the old Printing Bureau and the construction of access roads to the site, would add significantly to the original amount budgeted for the project. As a result, Steele predicted that the project would run well above its original budget.²⁷

Even though the public appears to have been unaware of the extra expenses associated with the development of Nepean Point, there were several complaints regarding the cost of the memorial. In a letter in the Pearson Papers from G.F. Maclaren, widespread opposition to the cost of the project was claimed. Of the over one hundred people Maclaren claimed to have consulted about the issue, he stated that “I have heard

²⁶ Robin Green, “Plan Big for '67, Committee Told,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 19, 1963.

²⁷ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, G.G.E. Steele, “Proposed Shrine of Remembrance — Nepean Point,” July 18, 1963.

no one who has been in favour of such expenditure for an additional war memorial on that site or on any other, with our country's finances and other needs pressing."²⁸ Having spoken to veterans of all ranks as well as ordinary citizens, Maclaren insisted that almost no one outside of the government and the Legion supported the proposed spending for the memorial. Another criticism of the project on the basis of its cost was made in the October 1963 issue of *Chatelaine*. In an article titled "A Birthday Present We Don't Need," the editor of the magazine, Doris Anderson, vehemently opposed the spending of \$1,500,000 on the project and characterised the memorial as "unimaginative and wasteful."²⁹ Echoing many of the critiques levied against the National War Memorial decades earlier by J.S. Woodsworth, she stated that the men who died in the Second World War "had little use for solemn edifices such as cenotaphs. Most of these men were products of the depression, painfully aware of the little opportunity offered youth in the thirties, cynical about expensive, hollow displays."³⁰ These two criticisms are only specific examples of opposition on the basis of cost. Many other similar complaints about the price of the new memorial were made by members of the public and print media.³¹

Opponents of the plan often made recommendations for other projects that the money to construct the war memorial would better serve. The alternatives that people suggested varied significantly. In Anderson's critique, the *Chatelaine* editor suggested

²⁸ Though I have not been able to identify Maclaren, he was clearly well known to the Prime Minister because he refers to him as Mike, asks personal questions about the wellbeing of the Prime Minister's family, and invites Pearson to join him on a fishing trip. See, LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, G.F. Maclaren to Lester B. Pearson, September 6, 1963.

²⁹ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, Doris Anderson, "A Birthday Present We Don't Need," *Chatelaine*, October 1963, 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ For other criticisms made against the estimated cost of the memorial, see "Today in Ottawa," *Ottawa Citizen*, August 7, 1963; "Reid 'Might Just' Run Against Whitton," *Ottawa Citizen*, August 14, 1963; LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, J.G. to Pearson, September 6, 1963; and LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, Canadian Women's Press Club to Pearson, December 10, 1963.

that a national library, a concert hall, or an imaginative park be created that could be enjoyed by as many people as possible.³² Taking a similar approach, the President of the United Church Women's Association, C. Carter, recommended that a national observatory or theatre be created in Ottawa that would be available for the public's use.³³ Many of those who opposed the planned spending on the memorial also said that the money could be used to fund a variety of educational and charitable initiatives. In a letter to the Prime Minister, Jean M. Wright wrote that the funds for the memorial should be spent on medical research or be turned into scholarships for postsecondary education.³⁴ G.E. Crispin suggested that the funds be donated to the United Nations Children's Fund or some other United Nations aid organisation.³⁵ In an article in *Saturday Night*, Arnold Edinborough wrote that the money could be used to support social programs such as the eradication of slum housing and the support of labour unions.³⁶ In yet a further criticism of the plan, Regina's *Leader-Post* appealed to Prime Minister Pearson's past by suggesting that the money planned for the memorial might be better spent on scholarships for students of international relations, assisting in the "furthering of a career such as that followed by Prime Minister Pearson in his younger days."³⁷ Despite the variety of ways that people suggested the money be spent, a central theme ran through most, if not all, of these critiques. People favoured the creation of a 'living memorial.'³⁸

³² LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, Doris Anderson, "A Birthday Present We Don't Need," *Chatelaine*, October 1963, 3.

³³ LAC, MG 26, N3, Vol. 39, C. Carter to Lester B. Pearson, October 21, 1963.

³⁴ LAC, MG 26, N3, Vol. 39, Jean M. Wright to Lester B. Pearson, September 6, 1963.

³⁵ LAC, MG 26, N3, Vol. 39, G.E. Crispin to Lester B. Pearson, October 2, 1963.

³⁶ Arnold Edinborough, "Let Canada Be the Memorial," *Saturday Night*, December 1963, 8.

³⁷ LAC, MG 26, N3, Vol. 39, William Thomson, "The Progress of a Dubious Idea," *Leader-Post* (Regina), August 29, 1963.

³⁸ Several of the previously mentioned critiques of the plan stated specifically that they were in favour of a "living memorial." For examples of these critiques, see those offered by Carter, Anderson, and Edinborough.

The debate surrounding the form the National Shrine of Remembrance would take fits into what Jonathan Vance has described as “aesthetic and utilitarian impulses.”³⁹ The former takes in a memorial that is created solely for the memorialization of the dead, while the latter refers to a memorial with the express purpose of serving additional functions within the community. Although Vance identifies a handful of successful efforts to create memorials that were a blending of the two impulses, he explains that the trend in the interwar years was towards one or the other. He goes on to state that those who favoured the utilitarian approach believed that any memorial that did not contribute to the social wealth of a community was wasteful. On the other hand, Vance states that proponents of aesthetic memorials viewed multipurpose monuments as “merely a cheap attempt to capitalize on public sentiment to build a facility that might not otherwise have been built.”⁴⁰ The decision between aesthetic and utilitarian memorials was one of the most important choices to be made in the early stages of the creation of memorials and often required negotiation among those tasked with commemoration initiatives to find a memorial that fulfilled the needs and wants of the community.⁴¹

Support for the creation of a memorial with a more diverse, utilitarian purpose was present during Prime Minister Mackenzie King’s initial announcement during the Second World War of a new commemoration in the capital. While the plan supported by the Prime Minister eventually came to include a memorial in the Gatineau Hills, he

³⁹ Vance, *Death So Noble*, 204.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁴¹ Vance is not the only scholar to identify debates between those seeking to create memorials with a singularly commemorative purpose and those advocating for memorials to fulfill a broader social function. In his study of First World War memorials in Britain, Alex King has referred to these two forms of commemoration as “works of public art, and socially useful facilities.” Generally speaking, King makes similar claims about the distinctions between these two types of memorials and the rationales used by the people who advocate for them. See Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: the Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 65-66.

viewed the development of the entire capital region as a form of commemoration. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation Member of Parliament for Winnipeg North Centre, Stanley Knowles, raised the possibility of creating a living memorial shortly after the Prime Minister first discussed the government's desire to honour those who served in the Second World War. On May 16, 1944, in Parliament, Knowles recommended that the government commit to providing those basic services that were still unavailable to many Canadians.⁴² Although he acknowledged that there were many possible projects to which the government could allocate money, Knowles focussed specifically on the utility of and need for adequate community halls in communities across the country. He argued that these facilities would serve both the need to memorialize the country's veterans and war dead while, at the same time, providing communities with something of real and tangible value.

The idea of a living memorial did not have its origins in the mid-twentieth century. In January 1925, only one month before the release of the *Conditions of Open Competition* for the National War Memorial, a series of letters to the editor appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*, questioning the value of a more traditional monument. In one letter from A.H. Jarvis it was suggested that a Memorial Hall be built in the capital, arguing that fallen soldiers of the Great War would say "Let us still be of service to you in such a memorial."⁴³ Exhibiting considerably more anger and frustration, H. G. Cox wrote, "So, while money is to be spent on the dead who do not want it, the living may go to ——."⁴⁴

⁴² Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Fifth Session—Nineteenth Parliament, vol. III (May 16, 1944), 2965-2966.

⁴³ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, A.H. Jarvis, "Hall or Monument," *Ottawa Citizen*, January 5, 1925.

⁴⁴ LAC, RG 11, vol. 4004, H.G. Cox, "The \$100,000 Memorial," *Ottawa Citizen*, January 5, 1925.

Although earlier instances such as these can be found, the preference among many for a useable memorial connects with the broader trends of commemoration during the period. In his monograph *War Memorials as Political Landscape: the American Experience and Beyond*, James M. Mayo notes that the mid-twentieth century witnessed an international rise in popularity of living memorials.⁴⁵ While traditional monuments were still created, there emerged a belief that memorials should be built with the dual purpose of remembering the past and serving the present. In a 1944 Gallup poll published on Remembrance Day, it was found that ninety percent of respondents favoured living memorials over traditional monuments.⁴⁶ For Canadians who opposed the creation of another traditional memorial, the reasoning was that they wanted a memorial that would serve the greatest number of citizens. They argued that, by electing to create a memorial that fulfilled a social need, rather than a monument to the dead, the country's efforts would not be forgotten. Through this method, it was believed that the funds could simultaneously benefit the current generation while, at the same time, memorializing the actions of Canada's armed forces.

Aside from concerns over the cost of the project and the form it should take, the most common criticism of the National Shrine of Remembrance was that it was unnecessary in light of the city's existing commemorative landscape. Concerned citizens argued that the country already had enough memorials in the nation's capital. In the same article that criticised Pearson and his plan for a National Shrine, the *Regina Leader-Post* attempted to address whether or not the country needed another war memorial. Because

⁴⁵ James M. Mayo, *War Memorial as Political Landscape: the American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 4-6.

⁴⁶ Denise Thomson, "National Sorrow, National Pride: Commemoration of War in Canada, 1918-1945," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 4 (Winter 1995/1996): 23.

the city already had the First World War monument, Memorial Chamber, Veterans Memorial Buildings, and the Commonwealth Air Services Memorial, the paper said that it would be superfluous to create another war monument.⁴⁷ These memorials in the capital, stated the paper, were more than sufficient for commemorating the service of Canadian military personnel at the national level. Presenting a slightly different critique of the plan, an editorial in the February 23, 1963 issue of *The Globe and Mail* argued that Canadians no longer required memorials to commemorate the country's armed forces: "We are surely beyond the stage in which we thought it appropriate to honor our dead by erecting elaborate structures which have no practical use."⁴⁸ There was thus a sense that the "modern" Canada of the 1960s no longer needed to fill the capital with grand and static memorials that catalogued the events of the past.⁴⁹

Many of the plan's critics specifically made the case that the commemorative purpose that the National Shrine of Remembrance aimed to fulfill was already being met by another monument in the capital. As noted in the *Ottawa Citizen* on the day after the announcement of the plan, *The Response* had come to be known as the National War Memorial in the years following its unveiling.⁵⁰ Perhaps in part because of this formal designation, many Canadians felt that it represented more than was originally intended. Although it had been imbedded with broadly representational and uniquely Canadian messages, the creators of the memorial never expressed any desire to expand the commemorative scope of the monument beyond that of the Great War. However, many

⁴⁷LAC, MG 26, N3, Vol. 39, William Thomson, "The Progress of a Dubious Idea," *Leader-Post*, 29 August 1963.

⁴⁸Oakley Dagleish, "In Memoriam," *The Globe and Mail*, February 23, 1963.

⁴⁹Dagleish refers to Canadian society as "modern" and therefore no longer in need of traditional memorials. See *Ibid.*

⁵⁰Norman Campbell, "Memorial on Nepean Point," *Ottawa Citizen*, February 20, 1963.

argued that the role and meaning of the memorial had exceeded original expectations. The Montreal based newspaper, *The Gazette*, articulates the line of argument that was made against the National Shrine: “It is true that [while] the present Memorial Chamber, and the present war memorial, were built before the Second World War and the Korean War...they have always been understood to stand for the sacrifices that Canadians have made in all the country’s wars.”⁵¹ Making a similar argument, *The Globe and Mail* suggested that, while “technically, the Confederation Square memorial honors those who fell in the First World War...it is widely known as the National Memorial,” possessing a broader commemorative purpose.⁵²

Critics believed that the creation of a new monument dedicated to participants of all wars would only lead to the “confusion of duplication” in light of the capital’s existing war monuments.⁵³ The simple solution to this issue would be to make small alterations to the existing National War Memorial with inscriptions to explain its expanded meaning.⁵⁴ Crucially, those articles and editorials that put forward this argument were not against the memorialization of the country’s military service. Indeed, *The Gazette* stated explicitly that “only a people without honor themselves would fail to honor those who have died nobly in defence of their country.”⁵⁵ However, critics who advocated against a new

⁵¹ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, “Should Ottawa Build a New War Memorial?” *The Gazette*, August 15, 1963.

⁵² Oakley Dalgleish, “In Memoriam,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 23, 1963.

⁵³ For the above quote, see LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, “Should Ottawa Build a New War Memorial?” *The Gazette*, August 15, 1963; for other criticisms that also suggested a confusion of duplication would result from an additional war memorial, see LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, J.G. to Pearson, September 6, 1963; LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, R.S. Morel to Pearson, September 8, 1963; LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, Stig Harvor to Pearson, November 29, 1963; and LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, Canadian Women’s Press Club to Pearson, December 10, 1963.

⁵⁴ Both the previously mentioned articles in *The Gazette* (August 15, 1963) and *The Globe and Mail* (February 23, 1963) suggest this as a possible solution.

⁵⁵ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, “Should Ottawa Build a New War Memorial?” *The Gazette*, August 15, 1963.

memorial felt that the National Shrine of Remembrance was intended to serve a function that the National War Memorial had already come to represent.

While there was substantial public opposition to the creation of the new memorial, the Legion remained steadfast in its support for the project throughout the debate. In response to what Editor-in-Chief of *The Legionary*, John Hundevad, referred to as the “considerable criticism” that had emerged, the Legion published an article titled “Criticism of Plan Answered,” attempting to refute systematically the main arguments made against the project.⁵⁶ With regards to the announced cost of the memorial, the Legion argued that, in light of what the memorial sought to achieve, the total cost was not an unreasonable amount. In reference to the over twenty billion dollars that the government had spent on the two world wars, the Legion argued that “if we could afford to spend that astronomical sum on defeating Prussianism and Hitlerism, surely we can afford to spend a tiny fraction of it to commemorate the memory of those who sacrificed their lives in those epic fights for freedom.” Responding to complaints that the project was superfluous given the existing monuments in the capital, the Legion reaffirmed its argument that no memorial existed in the country that commemorated all Canadian soldiers of past, present, and future conflicts. In terms of the calls for a living memorial, the Legion argued in its organ, *The Legionary*, that these were not, and could not be, effective war memorials:

Our stand is this: Ottawa should certainly have a national theatre and a concert hall. We are wholeheartedly in accord with this view. But we maintain that theatres, concert halls, sport stadiums, etc., however useful, desirable and important, are quite unsuitable AS WAR MEMORIALS because they lack all the essential qualities that suitable war memorials should possess. Places of amusement or recreation do not inspire remembrance...they do not serve as potent

⁵⁶ The information in this paragraph is taken from John Hundevad, “Criticism of Plan Answered,” *The Legionary*, April 1963, 14-15.

reminders of the need for constant vigilance...and they certainly do not possess that quality of spiritual validity which, to our way of thinking, is so essential to the appropriateness of any memorial erected in tribute of our fallen.⁵⁷

Throughout its impassioned defence of the project, the Legion rejected the arguments raised against the memorial. The National Shrine of Remembrance was both suitable and necessary to commemorate adequately the country's veterans and war dead.

Because of the controversy surrounding the National Shrine of Remembrance, Prime Minister Pearson's government announced in the House of Commons in October 1963 that plans to move ahead with the construction of the proposed memorial would be put on hold in order to provide the government with the opportunity to reassess the project.⁵⁸ The government was well aware of the criticisms of the plan, and, soon thereafter, opposition to the memorial also began to appear in Parliament and from veterans' organisations. After months of public debate, members of the opposition started to question the government on all aspects of the design and planning of the memorial. The questions the government was asked included the commemorative purpose of the National Shrine, the extent of the Legion's involvement in the project, the reasons why critics opposed the plan, and the government's intentions in light of the opposition that had developed towards the scheme.⁵⁹ Even though all parties had initially supported the initiative, the Pearson government was now left to answer these questions from members of the House of Commons. Indeed, as debate on the issue went on, even members of Pearson's Liberal party began to question the project behind closed doors. In a letter to

⁵⁷ Emphasis added by original author.

⁵⁸ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, First Session—Twenty Sixth Parliament, vol. V (October 28, 1963), 4078.

⁵⁹ For examples of those instances in which the government was questioned about the National Shrine in the House of Commons, see Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, First Session—Twenty Sixth Parliament, vol. IV (October 18, 1963), 3784; First Session—Twenty Sixth Parliament, vol. V (October 28, 1963), 4078-4079; First Session—Twenty Sixth Parliament, vol. V (November 27, 1963), 5149-5150; and First Session—Twenty Sixth Parliament, vol. VI (December 11, 1963), 5686-5687.

Pearson from the Ottawa area Member of Parliament, Lloyd Francis, the Prime Minister was warned of the lack of support for the initiative among his constituents; Francis inquired if it would be possible to appear before a Committee to voice his opposition to the proposal.⁶⁰

In addition to criticism in Parliament, the Prime Minister received a letter from the Naval Officers' Association of Canada (NOAC) that called into question the process by which the project was initiated.⁶¹ The NOAC asserted that a "dynamic or living memorial" would be a preferable expenditure of public funds.⁶² Furthermore, the NOAC questioned the previous government's decision to form an advisory committee on the matter that involved the Legion but did not consult with other veterans' organisations. While respecting the Legion, the NOAC called for the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Roger Teillet, to organise a meeting in which other veterans' groups, such as the NOAC, the Royal Canadian Air Force Association, and the War Amputations Association, could "be given the opportunity to make a contribution to the nature and site of any new War Memorial."⁶³

The hostility that developed towards the plan throughout 1963 and into 1964 raised serious questions about the feasibility of the project and the need for another memorial. In response to the debate surrounding the issue, a troubled Pearson wrote on the project file for the memorial "I am disturbed at the volume of criticism that this decision has caused. Either it should be reconsidered or some effort should be made to

⁶⁰ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, Lloyd Francis to Lester B. Pearson, September 10, 1963.

⁶¹ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, L.B. McIlhagga, "Proposed New War Memorial," September 5, 1963; the letter from the NAOC is stamped 'Seen by the Prime Minister.'

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

explain why this 'shrine' is being erected."⁶⁴ In October 1963 the project was put under review and the government made no official announcements of any plans to move forward. During a Legion Council meeting in Ottawa in November 1963, the veterans' association urged the government to proceed with the project as soon as possible to ensure that the memorial would be completed in time for the centennial celebrations in 1967.⁶⁵ However, with discussion of the memorial becoming less frequent in early 1964, the prospect of the National Shrine being completed soon disappeared as the government gave no indication that it would proceed with the plans. When Teillet was questioned about the memorial in the House of Commons by Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament George Muir in early 1964, the Minister deflected the query and stated that the government was unwilling to comment on the matter at that time.⁶⁶ The next instance in which the government was asked in Parliament about the National Shrine of Remembrance was not until early 1967. Asked whether a memorial or cenotaph would be built in Ottawa as part of the upcoming centennial celebrations, Minister Teillet announced that the government had no intention to go forward with the plan at that time or in the foreseeable future.⁶⁷

The debates surrounding the attempt to create a memorial for the armed forces of all the country's wars illustrates the divide that existed between how the government and the Legion perceived the commemorative landscape of the capital and how it was understood by public voices of discontent. Yet, through examining the discussions

⁶⁴ The underlining of the word "Either" was originally done by Pearson on the project file and reproduced by Hodgson in the memorandum on the subject. See LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, J.S. Hodgson to Roger Teillet, August 19, 1963.

⁶⁵ John Hundevad, "Legion Council Meets in Ottawa," *The Legionary*, December 1963, 9.

⁶⁶ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, Second Session—Twenty Sixth Parliament, vol. I (March 12, 1964), 826.

⁶⁷ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, First Session—Twenty Seventh Parliament, vol. XII (February 15, 1967), 13067.

surrounding the purpose of the memorial, it also becomes apparent that the government was in part responsible for this sense among Canadians that the National Shrine of Remembrance was unnecessary. When critics attacked the project, the Pearson government was unable to articulate the role that it envisioned that the monument would play in the act of commemoration. The original purpose of the memorial had been to find a new location for the Books of Remembrance. When the plan was announced by the Diefenbaker government, the role of the National Shrine was expanded to serve the dual purpose of memorializing the soldiers of all of Canada's wars and serving as a place for the Books. However, throughout the debates, critics focussed on the National Shrine of Remembrance's role as a tribute to Canadian veterans and war dead. Very few opponents of the plan even mentioned the Books in their critiques. Instead they organised their arguments around the fact that Ottawa already had memorials in remembrance of military service.

It was the Legion's interpretation of the proposed National Shrine, not that of the government, that drew criticism. The Legion understood the project to be concerned with the need to fill a commemorative void. In emphasising this aspect of the memorial, it downplayed the need for a new resting place for the Books of Remembrance. When the government finally began to understand the problem in late 1963, it was already too late. Even though there were no finalized designs for a monument on the site, those sceptical of the need for the memorial had turned against the project.⁶⁸ The government began increasingly to emphasise that the National Shrine's principal purpose was to hold the Books of Remembrance. However, the Legion had been the dominant voice defending

⁶⁸ Even as late as December 1963, the government stated that no designs had yet been prepared for a cenotaph on Nepean Point. It appears that no plans were ever made as to what form the monument at Nepean Point would take.

the project and, as a result, the public misunderstood the dual purpose of the plan. The criticism raised during the Pearson government's tenure was a rejection of the Legion's vision for the memorial, rather than of what the government had initially intended it to symbolise.

Compounding the Pearson government's inability to explain the dual purpose of the memorial, the actions of governments in the years following 1939 appear to have influenced the way Canadians understood the commemorative purpose of the National War Memorial. Between the unveiling of *The Response* and the announcement of the National Shrine, successive federal governments had emphasized the importance of the National War Memorial. In the various plans for the rebuilding of the national capital area, *The Response* always had primacy of place. In his report on the costs associated with the memorial, Treasury Board Secretary Steele mentioned that the concept for the 1963 project dated back to the original Gréber Plan from several years earlier.⁶⁹ Prime Minister King had hired Gréber in 1937 to create an urban development plan for the national capital that, among other things, addressed the setting for the National War Memorial. When he completed his work in 1950, Gréber presented his *General Report on the Plan for the National Capital*, or the Gréber Plan as it became known, in which he called for sweeping changes to the City of Ottawa, while highlighting the continuing importance of the National War Memorial. Among the recommendations that the Gréber Plan put forward were the development of ceremonial routes around the heart of the city and the undertaking of new projects to enhance existing features of national

⁶⁹ LAC, MG 26, N3, vol. 39, G.G.E. Steele, "Proposed Shrine of Remembrance — Nepean Point," July 18, 1963.

significance.⁷⁰ Although progress was initially slow, the creation of the NCC in 1959 quickened the process by which the government attempted to accomplish this goal.

When the NCC was established, it immediately went about conducting projects that fulfilled the Gréber Plan. One of the most important of these was the Redevelopment of Confederation Square Project. In February 1962 the NCC asked the architectural firm of John B. Parkin and Associates to submit recommendations for the continued development of Confederation Square and its approaches. Contained within the firm's report was a copy of the NCC programme outlining the objectives of the project. The programme noted that *The Response* had "become very much a focal point in the city and national scene."⁷¹ The document went on to state that the memorial constituted a "national symbol" and that it possessed a special "place in the nation's heart."⁷² The NCC was not the only government organisation to make statements about *The Response's* importance to the country. Official government releases appear to have played to this sense among Canadians in order to reinforce the significance of the memorial. Examples of this can be seen through government plans, departmental memoranda, and press releases in the years following the creation of *The Response*. It would appear that the government's initiatives either stimulated, or at the very least reaffirmed, popular conceptions of an all-encompassing symbolic meaning of the memorial as covering all of Canada's wars.

⁷⁰ John M. Roberts, "Nation-Building and Monumentalization in the Contemporary Capital: the Case of Ottawa-Hull, with Particular Reference to the Peacekeeping Monument and the Canadian Tribute to Human Rights" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 1999), 21.

⁷¹ National Capital Commission, *Confederation Square Development* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1962), 4.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 3, 11.

Whether originating from the government's efforts to emphasize the continued importance of the National War Memorial or through popular interpretations of the monument's significance, it is apparent that one of the principal reasons Canadians rejected the National Shrine was because they believed *The Response* already represented all of the country's military service. *The Response* had been built with the specific purpose of commemorating the First World War. The memorial's limited commemorative function was apparently evidenced by the detail and specificity with which the memorial portrayed the armed forces of the Great War. When the government began the National War Memorial project in the 1920s, the country had just emerged from the largest and most traumatic war in the nation's history. However, the original creators of the memorial could not have foreseen the events that would follow the monument's unveiling in 1939. With the country's continued involvement in the wars of the 1940s and the 1950s, the National War Memorial evolved to serve as the central memorial in the country. The debates surrounding the 1963 project illustrate the extent to which the understanding of *The Response* had changed and shifted. There was no need for another national commemoration of war.

The notion that peoples' interpretation of the National War Memorial's purpose could change is connected to a theme that many scholars have identified in commemoration. In her monograph *Art and War*, Laura Brandon argues that the messages that monuments convey are not "concretized."⁷³ Instead, their meanings become fluid and are constantly changing dependent upon the needs of society. Speaking of the ever-changing nature of the meanings of memorials, Mayo has argued that, "while war memorials themselves may be preserved, the society around them changes, and so

⁷³ Laura Brandon, *Art and War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 120.

does its history.”⁷⁴ He continues by stating that the experiences a society goes through can lead to changes in the way in which people perceive and understand the meaning of war memorials. As a result, the significance of memorials can be enriched, reinterpreted, or minimized.⁷⁵ A similar argument is made by Jay Winter, who argues that the mere passage of time can lead to changes in the meanings affixed to memorials of war.⁷⁶ Whether caused by the loss of the generation whose deeds were memorialized, or the occurrence of events unforeseen at the time of the monuments’ creation, Winter states that “the meanings of war memorials [are] bound to change.”⁷⁷ As was the case with the National War Memorial, though monuments are often created with a clear purpose in mind, their symbolism can be modified and may evolve depending on the needs of society. Indeed, as James E. Young notes, memorials have the tendency to “take on lives of their own, often stubbornly resistant to the state’s original intentions.”⁷⁸

Nor had Canadians been given much time to come to accept the specific purpose for which *The Response* was built. Dating back to 1919, Canadians participated in Armistice Day ceremonies, later known as Remembrance Day.⁷⁹ Each year on November 11 at eleven o’clock Canadians across the country observed two minutes of silence in honour of the country’s armed forces of the Great War. Prior to the completion of *The Response*, national ceremonies were held on Parliament Hill. When the monument was

⁷⁴ Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape*, 8.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁷⁶ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 98.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 3.

⁷⁹ The amendment to the 1931 Armistice Day Act officially changed the name of November 11th to Remembrance Day. The decision to do so came as a result of the Legion’s request that the name of the day be changed to emphasise the memory of fallen Canadians rather than the signing of the armistice, which the Legion viewed as a political act that implicated but did not directly involve Canadian soldiers. See Clifford H. Bowering, *Service: the Story of the Canadian Legion, 1925-1960* (Ottawa: Dominion Command, Canadian Legion, 1960), 196-197; and Denise Thomson, “National Sorrow, National Pride,” 7-8.

unveiled in May 1939, the official national ceremonies were moved to the National War Memorial. Within months of its completion, however, the country was thrust into another world war. During the first Remembrance Day ceremony held at the memorial in the opening months of the Second World War, Canadians continued to observe a moment of silence in memory of the country's Great War military service. Yet with so many Canadians lost overseas in the years that followed, it became impossible to ignore their sacrifices. Immediately after the Second World War a national discussion took place relating to the significance of November 11th. Between 1945 and 1946 the Legion strongly advocated for this date and the ceremonies surrounding it to become symbolic of all Canadian veterans and war dead. During its Dominion Convention in May 1946, the Legion passed a resolution that called for Remembrance Day to take on "the sacred purpose of commemorating the fallen in any war."⁸⁰ Shortly thereafter, the government acknowledged the Legion's position and Remembrance Day became associated with the recent war and over time increasingly came to represent the service of all those who fought for their country.⁸¹

Beginning with the first memorial service at the National War Memorial after the 1939 unveiling, Canadians had been unable to associate the memorial with any single conflict. Instead, they were compelled to honour the sacrifice of its soldiers in the ongoing and past wars. With the fluidity and perpetually evolving meaning of memorials, Canadians imparted to *The Response* an added sense of importance in light of the Second World War. In the years that followed, the government continued to emphasise the

⁸⁰ A description of the resolution and the above quote can be found in "Editorial Views: Remembrance Day," *The Legionary*, October 1946, 27.

⁸¹ For a discussion of the origins and evolution of the significance of Remembrance Day ceremonies, see Natascha Morrison, "Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards: Remembrance Day in Canada, 1918-2008," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 2010).

primacy of *The Response* in the commemoration of the nation's military experience.

When the government announced the plan to create another war memorial in 1963, many Canadians were shocked by and opposed to the project. There was nothing inherently wrong with the new memorial as proposed. However, Canadians already saw the National War Memorial as a commemoration of all those who had served their country.

The considerable effort on the part of the creators of *The Response* to construct a highly detailed monument that accurately portrayed Canada's overseas forces during the Great War had varying effects on peoples' understanding of the memorial in the years that followed. While some individuals and groups, such as the federal government and the Legion, believed that the National War Memorial was specifically meant to commemorate a single war, others developed a broader interpretation of the monument and its didactic purpose. The aesthetic qualities of the monument that some felt located it in a specific time and place became less significant as the memorial developed into a national symbol with wider national significance.

The Response was intentionally created to capture the service of all Canadians in the First World War, but only in that war. From the outset, this design feature had been one of the main elements of the monument that was emphasised and carried through in its final form. It was impossible for the government to have foreseen the need to memorialize the country's efforts in a war of similar magnitude. Although it became increasingly apparent in the months leading up to the unveiling of the memorial that the country might again be thrust into another global conflict, when Vernon March's entry was selected in 1926 as the winning design there was a sense that the recent conflict had been the war to end all wars. The expanded role of the National War Memorial was

brought to the forefront during the debates surrounding the creation of the National Shrine of Remembrance. Through its decision to allow the plan for a new national memorial in the capital to die, the government unofficially acknowledged the criticisms that had been made against the proposed memorial and recognized the new significance *The Response* carried. The National Shrine of Remembrance had been an attempt to remake the national memorial landscape. However, it only served to reaffirm the significance of the National War Memorial in the country's commemoration of war.

CONCLUSION

Canada's National War Memorial was created out of the need to officially honour the country's soldiers of the Great War. When the monument was built, the nation was experiencing a period of unparalleled commemoration as local communities erected monuments to pay respect to those who took up arms in defence of their country. The federal government realized that it too must pay tribute to the country's armed forces. It was decided that a national memorial would be built that both memorialized the dead and recognized the service of those who returned. But the National War Memorial project was created with additional purposes in mind. Expressive of widely representational and distinctly Canadian themes, the monument was intended to become more than a commemoration of the country's sacrifices in the First World War. From the initial announcement of the project in March 1923 to its unveiling by King George VI in May 1939, the creators of *The Response* regarded the themes of unity and a Canadian war effort distinct from those of other nations as paramount to the success of the project. Through the inclusion of a number of design features that affected the way in which the monument presented Canada's war experience, these messages were carried forward in the memorial's final form.

The great lengths that the government went to in order to emphasise these messages are attributed to an understanding by the creators of the monument that *The Response* could and must serve a broader purpose. This is perhaps best explained by historian Jacqueline Hucker, when she argues that "War memorials are created not for the

dead, but for the living.”¹ The National War Memorial had to commemorate Canada’s war dead. However, it was believed that it should also serve those who had survived the war. One of the stated purposes of the project had been to ensure that the memorial act as a reminder of the positive and prosperous future that was made possible by the sacrifices of Canadians during the Great War. Through the inclusion of messages that reminded Canadians of unity and the country’s accomplishments, the monument fulfilled the needs of memorializing the past, serving the present, and anticipating the future.

The emphasis on the promotion of these messages during the design and creation phases of the National War Memorial project can also be attributed to a trend that has been identified in commemoration. According to historian Angus Calder, monuments are as much about the time in which they are created as they are about what they are intended to commemorate.² The context of their creation is inseparable from the final product. The war had been a difficult and divisive time for the country. Tens of thousands of Canadians lost their lives, and there was disunity arising out of conflicting interpretations of the war. Over the course of the Great War and the decades leading up to the memorial’s unveiling, Canada gained recognition for its contributions to the war effort and campaigned for political autonomy within the sphere of the British Empire. Emerging from this environment, themes stressing unity and Canada’s unique experience during the war came to the forefront. The National War Memorial was a reflection of interwar Canadian society as well as a tribute to those who had served Canada in the war.

¹ Jacqueline Hucker, “After the Agony in Stony Places: the Meaning and Significance of the Vimy Monument,” in *Vimy Ridge: a Canadian Reassessment*, ed. Geoffrey Hayes, Andrew Iarocci, and Mike Bechthold (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 287.

² Angus Calder, “The Scottish National War Memorial,” in *Memory and Memorials: the Commemorative Century*, ed. William Kidd and Brian Murdoch (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004), 61.

The successes of the period between the first announcement of the project and its completion cannot be attributed to any single individual. Before its unveiling, Prime Minister King increasingly reflected in his diary on the significance of the monument and his involvement in the project. “What is particularly interesting,” he wrote in 1939, “is that I had to do, at the outset, with the character of the Memorial, its location, the competition by which the choice was made, with the increase in its size, and have had everything to do of late with determining its approaches [and] surroundings.”³ The National War Memorial project was not King’s only foray into the world of commemoration. Following the death of his close friend Henry Albert Harper in 1901, King led a government committee responsible for creating a memorial in honour of his friend.⁴ Furthermore, his government oversaw the creation of a small number of other federally sponsored memorials in the interwar years, including the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France. Carrying forward the lessons he had learned through his participation in these other commemorative efforts, King was instrumental in determining the initial purpose of the monument and ensuring that these messages were carried throughout its creation.

Of the few existing studies that address the memorial, the tendency has been rightly to credit King for his involvement in the project. However, the efforts of many of the other men who influenced the development of *The Response* are either downplayed or

³ WLMK Diary, February 27, 1939.

⁴ King was deeply affected by the loss of his friend. Together with other concerned citizens, the future Prime Minister successfully lobbied the government to create a memorial to Harper at the entrance to Parliament Hill. Because of the selfless circumstances of Harper’s death, the monument depicts the Arthurian knight, Sir Galahad, and evokes notions of heroism and gallantry. In the year after the unveiling of the monument in 1905, King published a book about his dear friend, describing Harper’s life and the creation of the memorial in his honour. See WLMK, *The Secret of Heroism: a Memoir of Henry Albert Harper* (Toronto: T. Allen, 1906).

neglected. The March family was the most responsible for the final form that the memorial took. Although King's government guided them on a number of issues, it was Vernon and later Sydney March who were principally responsible for designing and building the monument. Important contributions were also made by many leaders, public servants, and members of the armed forces: included among these were Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston, who oversaw the creation of additional figures; Brigadier-General J.S. Brown, who served as liaison between March and Ottawa; High Commissioner Howard Ferguson, who instructed March to alter the base of the memorial; Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, who approved the addition of three new figures and increased its overall dimensions; and individuals, such as Jacques Gréber, who was intimately involved in the development of the site.

The unveiling of the monument was not the end of the National War Memorial project. The events that transpired in the years following the Second World War are fundamental to an understanding of what *The Response* had come to mean to Canadians. When the government chose not to move forward with its plans to build the National Shrine of Remembrance in 1963, its decision represented an acknowledgement of the criticisms that had been made against the memorial. But the decision to let the Shrine die also had profound implications for the meaning of the National War Memorial. Critics of the project had presented a variety of reasons why they opposed the memorial: that the cost was too great; that the money might be better spent elsewhere; and that memorials should both commemorate the dead and serve the living. However, the most common critique, and the one that the Legion responded to, was that *The Response* had taken on a significance that extended beyond what the creators of the monument had envisioned.

The National War Memorial was intended to serve as a commemoration of all those who fought in the First World War, but only in that war. While the memorial was imbedded with broadly representational and distinctly Canadian themes, its purpose was understood to be chronologically limited. As a result of the debates that occurred in the 1960s, it became definitively apparent that the role and meaning of the memorial had evolved. The government's decision to abandon the project served as an acceptance of the criticisms made against the National Shrine and the arguments made for *The Response*. The National War Memorial was a tribute to all Canadian soldiers across all wars.

While the government acknowledged the argument made by critics of the National Shrine of Remembrance in the 1960s, it was not until May 29, 1982 that Ottawa officially recognized the expanded commemorative purpose of the National War Memorial. As had been the case in the 1950s and 1960s, the impetus officially to memorialize those who served in the Korean and Second World Wars came from the Royal Canadian Legion. In the years following the abandonment of the National Shrine project, the Legion had made no efforts to gain public support, nor did they petition the government for an additional memorial in the capital. According to J. Redmond Roche, Dominion president of the Legion from 1970-1972, the decision to abandon the plan in the 1960s created a "basic distrust of [the government's] motives" among members of the veterans' organization that lasted for several years.⁵ Perhaps as a result of this lingering distrust, calls for the federal government to memorialize the service of all of Canada's armed forces evaporated.

⁵ Roche's comments on the implications of the government's decision to not move forward with the National Shrine can be found in James Hale, *Branching Out: the Story of the Royal Canadian Legion* (Ottawa: Royal Canadian Legion, 1995), 146.

It was not until the summer of 1980 that the Legion determined that it was time to finish what it had been so close to achieving nearly two decades earlier. At a convention in Penticton, British Columbia in June 1980, Legion delegates agreed to a resolution that called upon the Department of Veterans Affairs formally to rededicate the memorial by adding the dates of the Second World War and Korean War to the base. In hopes of avoiding many of the problems that occurred in 1963, Veterans Affairs Minister Dan MacDonald informed the Legion that, if other veterans' organisations agreed with the alterations, the changes would be made.⁶ After gaining the necessary support for the rededication, a ceremony was held in the spring of 1982 that recognized the monument as the official memorial for the combined 112,064 Canadians who lost their lives in the Great War, the Second World War, and the Korean War.⁷

The Legion regarded the rededication of the memorial as a victory in their efforts to ensure that the service of all of Canada's armed forces be memorialized in the national capital. However, the alterations to the monument's purpose also represented the triumph of popular conceptions of the role of the National War Memorial and the foresight of the creators of the monument in imagining *The Response* as having a larger commemorative purpose. In the case of the National Shrine of Remembrance, the Legion set out to persuade the government to create a memorial to all fallen Canadians. Though the inscriptions that were later added to *The Response* only reference the three wars, the Legion was successful in accomplishing its goal. According to a Veterans Affairs publication released in conjunction with the rededication, the National War Memorial

⁶ The Minister's position that the rededication required the support of other veterans' groups is explained in an article appearing in the *Legion Magazine*, formerly known as *The Legionary*. See Pat Sullivan, "Minor Change, Major Meaning," *Legion Magazine*, August 1982, 31.

⁷ It is unclear which other veterans' groups were consulted before the 1982 rededication. However, the *Legion Magazine* suggests that other groups were indeed in agreement with the plan. See *ibid.*

“has, over the years, come to symbolise the sacrifice of all Canadians who have served Canada in times of war in the cause of peace and freedom.”⁸

Canada’s failure to create a memorial in the years following the Second World War was not an isolated event. In fact, very few elaborate memorials were built in this period. Many countries opted to simply add new dates or the names of the fallen to their existing First World War monuments.⁹ Canada was no different. Thousands of local memorials, in communities large and small, elected to commemorate war service in the same way, and at the same place, as they had honoured participants of the Great War. The decision to add the dates for the Second World War and the Korean War to the National War Memorial meant that Canada did in 1982 what many others had done in the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁰

Perhaps the decision not to build another national memorial was in the best interests of the country. In an editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* in August 1963, journalist Christopher Young stated, “I think it is clear that the new memorial is not really wanted by many people outside the organized veterans’ lobby.”¹¹ Rather than move forward with the plan, Young argued that it might be better to abandon the memorial for now in order to end the fighting between the critics and proponents of the scheme. “I cannot think,” he concluded, “that the men who fell in battle would want their epitaph written in

⁸ John Gardam, *The National War Memorial* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1982), 2.

⁹ Laura Brandon states that it was commonplace for the dates of the Second World War to be added to existing First World War Memorials, adding that virtually no projects were undertaken after 1945 to build grand memorials as had been done before. See Laura Brandon, *Art and War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 124.

¹⁰ Britain and Australia are examples of countries that also expanded the role of their First World War Memorials to include the Second World War. For summaries of the circumstances leading to the rededication of these memorials and the reasons behind their respective decisions to not build new monuments, see Mark Quinlan, *British War Memorials* (Hertford: Authors On Line, 2005), 57; and K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005), 392-393.

¹¹ Christopher Young, “Let’s Stop the Quarrel Over our War Memorial,” *Ottawa Citizen*, August 17, 1963.

rancour.”¹² Young’s comment was apt. The debate had pitted veterans against members of the public. Although it took the Legion many years to accept the arguments made against the creation of another memorial, its decision to ask that the government alter the monument illustrated its recognition of *The Response’s* enhanced commemorative role. The memorial was conceived and created as a national project with larger aims, but it was only meant to commemorate one war. Yet, the National War Memorial had come over the years to represent the way that Canadians have responded to all of their wars.

¹² *Ibid.*

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