

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF JUSTICE

*Education – Heritage – History
Visits – Exhibits – Publications*

Presented as part of the renovation project of the Vieux-Palais de justice de Montréal

Summary

From the time of New France, the legal universe in Quebec and Canada has been quite impressive. Its record is unique and bears witness to an unsuspected heritage; developed over several centuries and generations, it extends across three distinct legal regimes: the French, the English, and the Canadian. The Canadian Museum of Justice (CMJ) will highlight this judicial framework, its legacy, its architecture, and the great figures that have marked its history.

Great Jurists

In each of these periods, great jurists have distinguished themselves and elevated both Quebec's and Canada's legal status. We can mention Pierre du Calvet, James Fraser, René-Ovide Hertel de Rouville, Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine, George-Étienne Cartier, Jérôme Choquette, Marc-André Bédard. And more recently, Antonio Lamer, Louise Arbour, Richard Wagner, Nicole Duval-Hesler, Beverly McLachlin, Julius Grey, France Charbonneau, Rosalie Abella, and Allan Greenspan, to name only a few. Several eminent lawyers, judges, ministers of justice, professors of law or criminology have also stood out while achieving prominence in other fields as well.



The greater history of justice

Outside of the history of justice in Canada are those crucial stages in the global history of justice when, for an outstanding moment, humanity took a step toward harmony among the rights of the various peoples in a society. In this respect, the Code of Hammurabi is certainly the oldest known document that aims at harmonious relations between individuals. But there were many others: the Halakha of the Jews, the laws of Solon in ancient Athens, the Twelve Tablets of Roman Law, the laws of the Koran, the Magna Carta, the American Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Human Rights and the Citizen, the Napoleonic Civil Code, the International Bill of Rights, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and so on. Each of these achievements deserves study and a temporary exhibit as part of the CMJ.

Canadians live in a society of justice and laws

All of the CMJ's exhibits will highlight the fact that Canadian society is one of laws. From the Museum will arise the idea that Justice is not an empty word in our nation wherein rights guarantee a life of freedom and justice to all its residents. A visit to the CMJ will show that, in terms of respect for rights and freedoms, Canadian justice has achieved the highest level of excellence in the history of civilization, and that it maintains this standard by regularly revising its laws according to a philosophy based on tolerance, respect for minority rights, elimination of disparities and abuses, and on the expectation of creating a happier and more just society.

Location

The CMJ could be situated in the Annex of the Vieux-Palais de justice de Montréal, at 85 Notre-Dame Street East, in Old Montreal's Judicial District. Very popular with tourists, this area is ideal for the establishment of an institution that will - reinforce Canada's reputation as a safe and welcoming country for all citizens.

Clients

The CMJ will become a focal point and a gathering place not only for the legal community and the many jurists who have long frequented the district, but also for the general public. The location of the Museum in Old Montreal will provide millions of tourists from around the world with an opportunity to see one of its major attractions.

Activities

The CMJ will focus on important activities. Here is but a summary:

- A retrospective of our judicial heritage, including photographs, portraits, engravings, etc. of judges, lawyers, notaries, solicitors, from the French regime to the present.
- Exhibits on the leading figures of the time; the history of law in Canada – civil law as well as common law; key moments such as the enactment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the abolition of the death penalty, the new Civil Code; changes in criminality, the development of law schools across the country, etc.
- Guided tours of the judicial district for students, teachers and tourists – courthouses, prisons, etc.
- Presentation of educational programs, conferences and workshops.
- Publication of exhibit catalogues, monographs, and other works related to the exhibits.
- A boutique featuring novel judicial artefacts, books, DVDs and other souvenirs.
- A café during the summer months on the terrace fronting the Museum.

Note: Old Montreal is the area that attracts the most visitors in the city.

It should also be noted that few other countries have similar institutions, e.g., The Justice Museum in Ghent, Belgium, the Paris Bar Museum, and Nottingham's National Justice Museum in the United Kingdom.

This initial presentation is to be followed by more detailed data including an itemized budget.

Preliminary Estimate

A room in the Vieux-Palais de justice de Montréal, approximately 30m x 30m in size (similar to the room where the book, *The Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of Canada*, was launched in 2015) should suffice to set up permanent exhibits and an initial temporary exhibition. Accomplishing this, including designs, texts, presentation panels, collected artefacts, display cases, and reception infrastructure, along with hiring a museologist and staff, is expected to cost an estimated \$250,000. This initial budget will permit the Museum to commence activities as soon as the funds have been raised.

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