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ARCHITECTURAL HIGHLIGHTS OF CANADA'S NEW EMBASSY IN BERLIN

In April 2005, Canada will officially open a new building designed to house Canada's Embassy in Berlin, Germany. Located in the heart of the city, the Embassy has been designed and built to reflect Germany's importance to Canada as a G8 partner and a central player in the European Union.

Canada's new Embassy in Germany is designed by **Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg (KPMB)** of Toronto, **Gagnon Letellier Cyr** of Quebec City and **Smith Carter** of Winnipeg. The Embassy's interior architectural design is by **HOK/Urbana** (Ottawa-Berlin).

The team of architects (referred to as KGS) has created an inviting space using Canadian materials and highlighting Canadian design and technology. The building's design provides clients and other members of the public with access to the Embassy. Hundreds of pedestrians are expected to use its "Northwest Passage" daily to cross between what were once the old East and West portions of Berlin, from a main avenue called Ebertstrasse to the octagonal Leipziger Platz. The new Embassy building provides a symbol of Canada's commitment to a newly rebuilt and revitalized Berlin, and to a deepening bilateral relationship between Canada and Germany.

The building mirrors the diversity and distinctiveness of Canada's geography through the use of a variety of materials from different Canadian regions. It is faced with Tyndall limestone from Manitoba, with featured materials inside including Douglas-fir from British Columbia, black granite and maple from Quebec, Eramosa marble from Ontario—creating spectacular internal spaces. The design conforms to strict Berlin city planning and environmental sustainability guidelines, while maintaining an eloquent expression of the openness of Canada.

In the public areas, the main entrance lobby is a great mall entered through the central bay of the façade on Leipziger Platz. The reception area offers an unobstructed view of a welcoming water garden and the main circular staircase leading to the first floor. Alongside the main entrance, the Northwest Passage for pedestrians offers a window into Canada through strategically placed video screens.

The central feature of the design—or "the heart of the Embassy" in the words of lead designer, Bruce Kuwabara—is the "Timber Hall", a 20-faceted room lined with recycled Douglas-fir and equipped with state-of-the-art information and communications technology. With its excellent acoustics and cutting-edge speaker system (situated behind the wood panels), the room is ideal for a variety of events, from musical performances to conferences. The hall is open to the sky by a lightly framed roof and

glazed skylight system. The outer exterior cladding is copper, and the grand curved stairway is made of black granite from Quebec.

On the ground level, a multimedia information centre provides a place for visitors to learn more about Canada in unique and innovative ways through state-of-the-art technology, including interactive info-terminals and plasma screens (Smart Boards), listening stations and computer terminals for on-line research of Canada.

The Canada Room, with its impressive size and large windows, is ideally designed to accommodate a variety of public functions. Located on the Embassy's second level, this room can be divided in two by a Skyfold partition—new Canadian technology that enables a wall to come down from the ceiling.

The 10th-floor dining room offers spectacular views of the Tiergarten Park, the Reichstag and Brandenburg Gate, as well as the Sony Centre and Potsdamer Platz. This room and other public spaces in the building will accommodate up to 400 guests for a variety of Embassy functions or related business and cultural events.

In addition to making maximum use of natural light, the building incorporates a “green” roof designed by Berlin-born Canadian landscape architect Cornelia Oberlander. Windows and shutters allow natural circulation of air and control of temperatures, thereby minimizing energy costs. The overall sense of light that pervades the building also alludes to the openness that Canada wants to project to the world. All material and mechanical systems were chosen on the criteria of longevity.

Built as a public-private partnership, the new Embassy building also houses retail and residential space in the ground and upper floors not occupied by the chancery—providing an inspired example of the integration of new construction and mixed uses into an historic location.

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