

Financial boost for Holocaust memorial

Federal government to match funds up to \$4M

BY MOHAMMED ADAM, OTTAWA CITIZEN APRIL 3, 2012

Plans for a Holocaust monument in Ottawa got a big boost Monday when the federal government pledged a \$4-million contribution to help build the memorial.

The government has agreed to match by up to \$4 million "whatever is raised to build the monument," said Avi Benlolo, president and CEO of Toronto's Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, who was at the announcement in Ottawa.

Benlolo said the memorial would stand as a living monument to the horrors of hate, and commended the government for supporting the endeavour to recognize "one of the most horrific events in modern history." He said the monument is particularly important in this "disturbing era" of Holocaust denial.

"The monument will help Canadians to remember the Holocaust and to learn about the tragedy not only from a historical point of view, but to teach the world about the consequences of hate and intolerance," Benlolo said.

"A monument like that in Ottawa, standing there forever, will begin a conversation for people."

Benlolo said that Minister of State for democratic reform Tim Uppal and Canadian Heritage Minister James Moore also announced a fourmember council to spearhead fundraising for the memorial.

According to a news release from the office of Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, the members of the National Holocaust Monument Development Council are: Daniel Friedman, a rabbi at the Edmonton Beth Israel Synagogue, Ralph E. Lean of the law firm Cassels Brock and Blackwell, Alvin Segal, chairman and CEO of Peerless Clothing Inc, and Fran Sonshine, national chair of the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem.

The release, however, did not include any reference to a \$4-million matching fund, and spokespersons for Baird could not be reached for comment.

The idea of a monument to honour the memory of the six million Jews and other minorities who were killed by the Nazis during the Second World War came from Uppal, whose private member's bill was passed by the House of Commons about two years ago.

The legislation however, was silent on who will pay for the memorial and Monday's announcement is expected to move the project forward.

"Canada has been a strong leader in the fight against anti-Semitism and all forms of racism," Uppal said.

"The National Holocaust Development Council's work recognizes the important contributions to our country of those who survived these horrific events and will honour the memory of those who were victims to the Holocaust."

Uppal added that "we must never forget what happens when humanity and fundamental human rights are discarded, as this is the only way to ensure it will never happen again."

Benlolo said no site has been chosen for the memorial but he believes the sponsors have some ideas about location. The key thing now is to raise whatever it will cost to build it and once the money is in place, the project will proceed.