



Ontario Association
of Architects

DIAMOND, A.J. (1932–2022)

Born in South Africa and educated in architecture at the University of Capetown, then politics, philosophy, and economics at Oxford University, Jack Diamond established his first architectural practice in South Africa before moving to Pennsylvania, followed by Toronto in 1964. He established his Toronto practice in 1975, which evolved into the highly acclaimed and award-winning Diamond Schmitt Architects.

Diamond made a profound contribution to urban reform, leading the implementation of infill housing in Toronto to strengthen existing at-risk neighbourhoods. Beverley Place Hydro Block (1978), a public housing community knit into the city's fabric with uncommon sensitivity and style, exemplified his thinking at the time. He intelligently demonstrated the economic and societal benefits of transforming heritage for new uses, illustrating low-rise alternatives to high-rise development at comparable land use densities, and articulating the negative impacts of low-density suburban sprawl on public transit, servicing costs, social cohesion, and the environment.

A few of Diamond's notable projects include the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto (2006); The Foreign Ministry (2002) and Jerusalem City Hall (1994), both in Israel; the Mariinsky II Opera and Ballet Hall (2013) in St. Petersburg, Russia; and the Life Sciences Centre and Medical School at the University of British Columbia (2005). He was a teacher, collaborator, and mentor who defined an era of architecture in Toronto while building an exhilarating studio culture. Diamond's mentorship shaped a significant number of architects who went on to form influential practices of their own in Toronto, across Canada, and abroad. His

skills as a draughtsman and watercolourist were notable; three exhibitions featured his drawings.

Diamond received honorary doctorates in engineering from Dal Tech (now part of Dalhousie University) in Halifax and law from the University of Toronto. He also received the Gold Medal from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (2001), the Jane Jacobs Lifetime Achievement Award (2014), and the Ontario Association of Architects Lifetime Design Achievement Award (2013). Diamond is a member of the Order of Ontario (1997) and an Officer of the Order of Canada (1995).

Beyond his interests and commitment to urbanism and architecture, he contributed significantly to civic-minded committees such as the Advisory Committee on Design to the Canadian National Capital Commission. He was a commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and one of five commissioners leading the Greater Toronto Area Task Force recommending changes to governance, taxation, land-use planning, and transportation issues. His great love of music is evidenced by his membership in the Bach Tercentenary Festival and the International Choral Festival. He was a Life Trustee of the Canadian Opera Company.

One of Diamond's last works of architecture was the 2016 design submission for the United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens, adjacent to Whitehall and the British Parliament in London. The submission fused his passion for human rights, social inclusion, equity, and a just society with powerful architecture that engaged the landscape and shaped a visitor's journey from darkness toward light.