

Dictated, 9.00 p.m.

December Sixth  
1944

Reference Your H.Q. 54-27-41-48-F.D.2 and F.D.6

Dear Mr. Ross,

In response to your letter of November 27th and our telephone conversation, I tried to reach you at your office this evening by telephone but am told by your secretary that you will not arrive until after the hour at which I must leave for New York. I am therefore reducing to the form of a letter the general results of the meeting of the Building Committee of McGill University which was held this afternoon.

As you will remember, the original estimates submitted by Mr. Fetherstonhaugh to Brigadier Dillon and others on August 7th regarding the Annex to the Neurological Institute were very tentative figures based on rough calculation of the cubical content of the proposed building; and in view of the urgency of the situation the Dominion Government decided to proceed with the contract on a cost-plus basis.

McGill University had already adopted an identical decision in regard to the internal reconstruction necessary in the Montreal Neurological Institute itself, and as I think I told you in my telephone conversation with you, the cost of the work that the University has undertaken, which was originally estimated at little more than \$20,000, is now closer to \$110,000.

The new estimates that Mr. Fetherstonhaugh has submitted, aggregating, with architects' fees, a total of \$161,925, represent the first detailed estimate that has been made of the cost of the Annex on the basis of detailed plans and itemized statements of expenditure. The general reason for the increase in cost is therefore not to be found in any added requirements suggested by Dr. Penfield or by the University, but in the fact that, as so often happens nowadays, the preliminary estimates proved to be unduly conservative.

I have checked the whole situation carefully this afternoon and the only additional items not covered in the original discussions are: \$225 for a duplicate Nurses' Station on the Second Floor, \$400 for two vestibules at the emergency exits on the Second Floor (which are essential for weather protection in the Montreal climate) and \$4,500 for the provision of additional living quarters on the First Floor which will house a total of eight maids. The first two items are comparatively insignificant and of the kind that are likely to be encountered in any job of this kind. The additional living quarters for maids could, if you wished it done, be eliminated from the contract at a net saving of \$3,900 - since some money has already been spent in foundations - but such elimination of living quarters would involve an extra monthly expense of \$15 for each maid, which has to be paid to them in cash as supplementary living allowance when quarters are not provided within the Institute. This sum would amount to \$120 a month, or \$1,440 a year, which seems a rather high price to pay for a saving of \$3,900 at the present moment.

Over against these extras, aggregating \$5,125, the Building Committee of the University, in consultation with the architect, has agreed on the following changes in specification, with a view to reducing to the barest minimum the costs of the work that the Government has undertaken:

Reduction of quality in hardware	\$800
Substitution of cheaper linoleum	200
Elimination of the whole ventilating system except for exhaust fans in a few necessary areas	4,615
Elimination of the penthouse designed to house the ventilating equipment appropriate to such a type of hospital	500
Substitution of cheaper toaster	300
Elimination of window cleaner belts	150

These items amount to a total of .....\$6,565, and I confess that I suggest many of them reluctantly. It is absolutely impracticable in a hospital designed for head injury cases to eliminate such things as tiled floors, dados, nor is it wise in an annex to the Institute for us to substitute wooden kitchen furniture instead of the metal furniture originally specified. We are not here dealing with an ordinary hospital, but with a very highly specialized Institute where very small quantities of dirt or other insanitary conditions may mean the difference between life and death to the patients who are being treated.

Regarding the special equipment. The sterilizers which appear in the architects' estimates at \$4,170, and the feed conveyor which figures at \$450, can be eliminated from the contract figures, on the understanding that this equipment will be supplied in kind by your Department.

In regard to the Physiotherapy bath, and the dishwasher in the Kitchen, both of which are regarded as absolutely essential by the Director of the Neurological Institute, McGill University will have to find the money to instal these if the Government refuses to do so.

Reviewing the whole situation in the light of these suggestions, the following represents a precise statement of the financial picture involved:

Estimated cost of the Annex, less a stairway which has been eliminated, as set forth in the architects' letter of November 17th, 1944 .....	\$158,925
(This includes the additions to the original plan which are referred to above.)	
Reductions for the changes of specification mentioned above.....	\$6,565
Reductions proposed by elimination of the four items of equipment above mentioned.....	<u>7,120</u> <u>13,685</u>
Present estimated cost of the building.....	<u>\$145,240</u>

This figure of \$145,240 includes all architects' fees and is only \$11,000 above the figure of \$134,000 (including architects' fees) which was originally agreed upon in August. In the light of the unexpected increase in the costs of the work which is being done by McGill University, I think you will agree with me that this difference between original estimates and revised estimates is very small, since I understand that in most Government contracts of this kind a margin of 15% is regularly provided. It may be that the final costs of the building will be little more than this, but I can assure you that the whole project has been stripped to the bone, and that the present proposal represents a bare and absolute minimum for the provision of accommodation that will make it possible to treat at any one moment of time twenty-seven more patients from the Armed Services than the Institute can handle at present. You say in your letter that you do not wish to ask the approval of

Council for an additional amount unless an imperative need having to do with the appropriate treatment of uniformed personnel can be demonstrated. The large number of Service personnel at present awaiting admission to the Institute, who cannot receive the attention that they urgently need because of the inadequacy of space, constitutes in itself a demonstration of need; and I can only assure you, in the light of a good deal of experience with the operation of the Montreal Neurological Institute, that the figures that are proposed represent a very cheap method of obtaining the highly specialized accommodation and facilities that are needed for head injury cases.

This memorandum may seem rather lengthy, because I have tried to set forward the whole situation, in lieu of a telephone conversation. I hope that it may clarify any of the doubts that are in your mind; but I do want to assure you that if there are any matters on which you would like further information, I shall be glad indeed to come to Ottawa and discuss them with you, or to see you in Montreal. Although this is not a University project, and I realize that I have no business meddling in the operations of the Dominion Government regarding the construction of a military hospital that is essential for the treatment of Service personnel, I feel, as a citizen as well as in my University capacity, that this is a project of supreme importance, in regard to which every one of us would, at a later date, deeply regret every day's delay at this stage which we could have prevented. For that reason I hope that you will consider me at your disposal, if by further discussions I can accelerate the completion of the project.

On the other matter covered by your subsequent letter, I am asking the Dean of the Medical Faculty, together with Dr. Penfield, to prepare for me a comprehensive statement of per diem charges, which will enable me to take up a certain the various questions that you have raised. I shall be back from New York by the weekend, and expect to send forward to you another letter on that matter early next week.

Meanwhile, with renewed good wishes to you, I remain,

Cordially yours,

Alexander Ross, Esq.,  
Deputy Minister of National Defence,  
O t t a w a, Ontario.