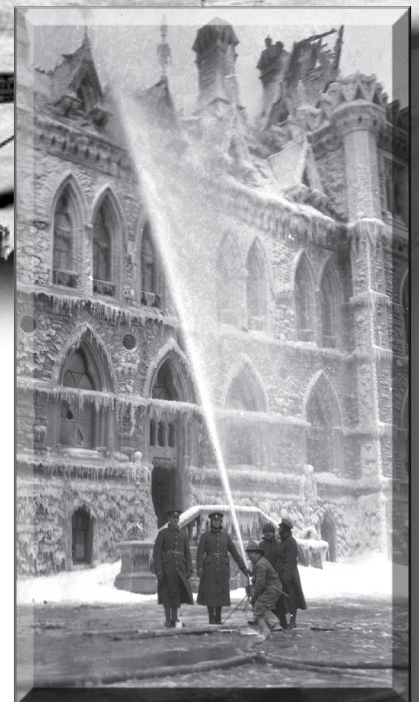# The Great F
on Parliai

1. Before the fire: The original Centre Block, circa 1880.

2. Centre Block in ruins.
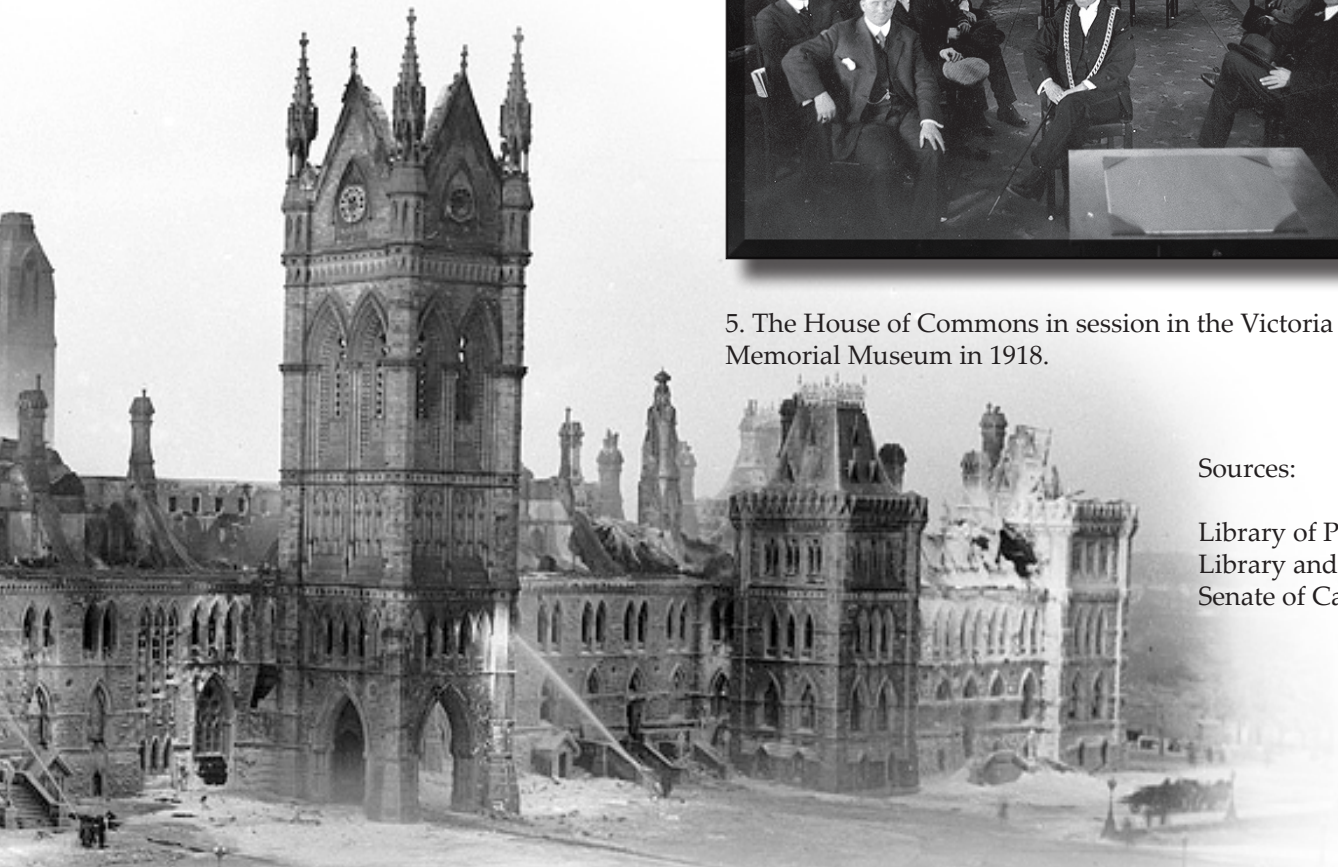

3. A soldier guarding furniture that was saved from the burning building.

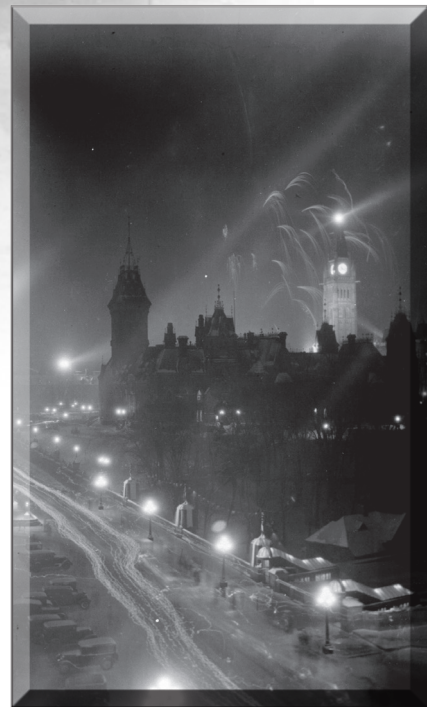d covered in ice, February 4, 1916

Fire of 1916
...nent Hill

5. The House of Commons in session in the Victoria Memorial Museum in 1918.

Sources:

Library of Parliament
Library and Archives Canada
Senate of Canada

6. View of Centre Block the morning after the fire, February 4, 1916.

7. July 1, 1927: Canada turns 60 and the Peace Tower is inaugurated.

On a bitterly cold evening on February 3, 1916, Members of Parliament were in the House of Commons to participate in an evening session when a fire started on one of the lower shelves in a Reading Room at 8:55 p.m. Four minutes later the first fire engine arrived on the Hill as flames engulfed the roof of Centre Block. At 9 p.m., the Chief Doorkeeper of the House of Commons alerted MPs by yelling, "There is a big fire in the Reading Room; everybody get out quickly!" Quick thinking by Librarian Michael Connolly MacCormac saved the structure from complete destruction when he dispatched a messenger to close its iron doors. At the stroke of midnight the bell in the Victoria Tower came crashing down. The fire raged towards the Senate by 12:45 a.m., but firefighters' efforts to contain it allowed many pieces of art to be saved from the Senate side. It was 2:00 a.m. before firefighters had it under control (though it continued to smolder for much of the next day and flared up twice more). Seven people lost their lives in the Great Fire of 1916 and the Centre Block was in ruins. Reconstruction, which began later that year, and was completed in 1922 (with the Peace Tower being completed in 1927).

Credits: All Photos Library and Archives Canada, 1. c015106, 2. a89212, 3. John Boyd/r000244, 4. John Boyd/r000237, 5. a002433, 6. William James Topley/a009249, 7.Samuel J. Jarvis/a025110