

**91-128**

London, Ontario

**Wolseley Barracks, "O" Block**

Canadian Forces Base London

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The "O" Block of Wolseley Barracks was built as a drill hall in 1935-36, to designs by the Department of Public Works under the direction of Chief Architect T.W. Fuller. The Department of National Defence is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 91-1 28.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The Wolseley Barracks drill hall ("O" Block) was designated Recognized for its environmental significance, as well as for its association with the development of the professional army in Canada, in particular with the establishment of the Canadian Tank School, and with the provision of public funds for Depression Relief construction projects.

After the withdrawal of British troops in the 1870s, Canada's defence rested solely on its volunteer militia. In 1883, this part-time force was supplemented by the beginnings of a permanent professional army that included three infantry companies in different regions. London was the chosen location for a fourth company in 1885 - Company "D" - and Wolseley Barracks was established for its use. Other regional companies were subsequently added, and in 1901, ten in Southern Ontario were drawn together to form what would eventually be known as the Royal Canadian Regiment. Since 1923, the headquarters of this regiment - now Canada's senior regular force infantry regiment - has been at Wolseley Barracks. In 1935-36, Wolseley Barracks received a new drill hall with appropriations under the Public Works Construction Act, designed to stimulate the Canadian economy during the Depression - a rare instance in which such money was so used. The newly-formed Canadian Tank School was the first full-time user of the facility, opening for instruction here in 1936.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of this structure resides in its massing, functional design, quality materials and craftsmanship, and in the character of the drill hall interior. The military function of the drill hall is expressed in its external form: a long rectangular mass under a gable-roof; the large troop door and tall round-headed window above forming the focus of the three-bay main facade; the tall high-set windows lighting the drill space; and the regular rhythm of buttress-like piers on all elevations. The clarity of this profile and characteristic features should be preserved.

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**Wolseley Barracks, "O" Block** (Continued)

The exterior facades are relatively unchanged. The walls are buff-coloured brick with contrasting window sills, thus complementing nearby Wolseley Hall, the original 1886 "D" Company quarters. Repairs to the masonry should only be undertaken with the assistance of a masonry conservation expert. The drill hall retains its original multi-paned metal windows; these should be carefully maintained and repaired.

The interior of the drill hall is divided into two functional areas: the front two-thirds forms the open drill space, while the rest is occupied by two floors of offices and classrooms. A viewing gallery, supported on columns, fronts this administrative space. A shooting gallery is located in the partially excavated basement. This organization of space is characteristic of small drill halls and should be preserved. All original interior finishes and historic building fabric should be maintained and repaired in kind.

The drill hall is surrounded by pavement on all sides. A large open area in front of the drill hall provides an unobstructed view of the major facade; this should be preserved. The complementary visual relationship between Wolseley Hall and the drill hall should be protected.

1995.04.26

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.