

FINAL

588 Booth Street

The Administration Building was constructed in 1958-59. It was designed by the Toronto architectural firm of Allward and Gouinlock for the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys. Alterations include the 1972 addition of an enclosed corridor running past the west side of Camsell Hall connecting the Administration Building to the adjacent 22-storey tower, and the addition of a barrier-free ramp at the main entrance. The building is currently used as for administration by its custodian, Natural Resources Canada (NRCan). See FHBRO Case File No. 97-083.

Reasons for Designation

The Administration Building has been designated “Recognized” because of its historical associations, its architectural style and its environmental significance.

As part of the Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) complex of buildings on Booth Street, the Administration Building reflects the significant role of NRCan in the exploration and mapping of Canada and the development of the mining sector. The Administration Building testifies to the post-Second World War acceleration of mineral exploration and ore testing by the federal government. The building was designed to accommodate the administrative functions of the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys during a period of tremendous expansion. The development of the NRCan complex at the Booth Street location reflects the relocation of federal government offices out of the central core of Ottawa in response to recommendations of the Gréber plan for the national capital.

The building is a good example of the International Style of architecture, which promoted clean lines, legible structure, asymmetrical balance in composition and a building form which expresses internal function. The International Style was widely used by the federal government during the period of unprecedented expansion in which the building was constructed.

The Administration building contributes to the campus-like setting of the NRCan complex through its complementary massing and formal relationship to adjacent buildings. The landscaped open spaces between the buildings were included as integral to the original design; this feature has been maintained and enhanced since the building’s construction.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Administration Building resides in its expression of the International Style of architecture, including its massing, composition, materials, internal planning, and site relationships.

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L-shaped in plan, the Administration Building is characterized by its flat roofs, by the asymmetrical balance of its intersecting wings, and by the set-back of the ground floor of the Booth Street facade behind dark granite columns to make the upper three storeys appear to float above it. The entrance and elevator block, the tallest volume of the building, is situated at the intersection of the 'L' and features a glass wall, a device employed to reduce its apparent mass. The north side of the building features a separate volume housing Camsell Hall, a small auditorium. The intersecting volumes, the asymmetrical massing, the interplay between opaque and glazed surfaces, and the flat roof lines are characteristic of the International Style design and should be respected.

The building is of steel frame construction, with brick veneer as the exterior finish material. A horizontal emphasis is created through the use of contrasting cut stone for the window sills and the cornice capping, and through the arrangement of windows in long horizontal bands. The absence of decorative elements, the size and placement of windows, the use of aluminum as the window framing material, and the broad expanses of blank wall are all characteristic of the building's architectural style and heritage character.

Interior finish materials are typical of the style and period: terrazzo in the hallways and stairs, marble walls and floor in the main lobby, and polished stainless steel for the entrance and elevator doors and stairwell railings. These materials reflect the characteristic use of sleek, polished, hard-surfaced materials of high quality in International Style architecture, and should be maintained. For any future rehabilitation or upgrading of the interior consideration should be given to continuing this characteristic choice of materials.

The Administration Building is located in a landscaped campus-like setting among a group of federal structures of similar scale and design. The buildings were designed to form a cohesive campus whose open spaces were designed to complement their placement and provide a transitional buffer zone between the complex and adjacent properties. The construction of a 22-storey tower near the northeast corner of the building, and connected to it by an enclosed corridor running along the west side of Camsell Hall, was a departure from the intended uniformity of the building's scale and design. Future development should be based on an understanding of the original design intentions. The relationship of the Administration Building with its surrounding open spaces and with adjacent structures should be respected.

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

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