

**FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT
RIDEAU HALL COMPLEX
1 SUSSEX DRIVE, OTTAWA, ONTARIO**

FHBRO Number : **86-024**
DFRP Number : **02078**
Resource Name: **Rideau Hall Complex**
Address: **1 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario**
FHBRO Status: **Classified Federal Heritage Building**
Construction: **1838-2004**
Designer: **F.P. Rubidge, Thomas Fuller & David Ewart**
Original Function: **Gouvernement**
Current Function: **Gouvernement**
Modifications: **Additions and renovations to the Mackay Castle (1965-2004), entrance drive (1866); construction of 20 outbuildings (1866-1895), main gates (1867) and fence (1927-1935); iron light posts (1902); pergolas and intense plantings (1920's); Lady Byng's rockery (1926); Terry Fox Fountain of Hope (1950's); parking lot in service area (1950's).**
Custodian: **National Capital Commission**

Description of historic place

The Rideau Hall Complex contains the official residence, the landscaped grounds and the outbuildings, which together constitute the vice-regal estate of the Governor General of Canada. The components of the complex are carefully arranged on a fenced 88-acre site designed in the tradition of a 19th-century English country estate. Initially owned and constructed by Thomas Mackay, the villa, along with a portion of the land, has served as the site for the residence of the Governor General since 1864. The Rideau Hall Complex is bordered by Sussex Drive, Mackay Street and Dufferin Road, and is located at the end of the ceremonial route from Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

Heritage value

The Rideau Hall Complex was designated "Classified" because of its important historical associations, its architectural qualities, and its landmark and environmental values.

Historical value:

The historical significance of the Rideau Hall Complex is primarily reflected in its long and continuous role as the vice-regal home for the Governor General of Canada. Its earliest associations are with Thomas Mackay, a local industrialist involved in the construction of the Rideau Canal and the early development of Bytown, now Ottawa. The federal government rented Mackay's original villa in 1864 and purchased the

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property in 1868, when the residence of the Governor General of Canada was permanently transferred to Ottawa. The successive Governors-General and their families were housed at this official estate and brought their individual refinements and developments over the years. With the emergence of a united and independent Canada, the Rideau Hall Complex became, as the residence of the Crown's representative in Canada, a focal point of political and social life in the National Capital.

Architectural value:

The Rideau Hall Complex displays very good aesthetic qualities, with the Mackay Castle as the principal focal point of the estate grounds and the smaller structures judiciously placed in the picturesque landscape. A number of outbuildings have survived to illustrate the evolution of the Rideau Hall Complex and present very good functional values associated with a vice-regal estate, notably the Gate Lodge, the Cricket Pavilion, the Stable Building, the Gasometer (Dome Building), the Dairy Building, the Greenhouses and the Rideau Cottage. Many of them have also retained their integrity of design and materials. Very good workmanship can also be found throughout the estate, in particular in the public and ceremonial spaces of the Mackay Castle, as well as in the iron and masonry work of the main gates and fence. The buildings forming part of the Rideau Hall Complex represent a very good example of the Department of Public Works architects of the time, such as F.P. Rubidge, Thomas Fuller and David Ewart.

Environnemental value:

The Rideau Hall Complex is distinguished by the very good quality and high significance of its grounds which, from the start, have contained the essential components of a country estate in the English landscape tradition. The property evolved with the tastes and ambitions of a succession of Governors-General, while retaining its essential composition and character. The site follows the primarily established boundaries and patterns of use, including the service sector to the north of the main residence, as well as a visually-perceptible recreational layer and some earlier remnants of the farm. The predominantly soft landscape presents a rich variety of mature trees and plant material and contains key elements with their own characteristics and specific roles: the northern woods, the entrance park, the south open lawns and the ornamental gardens. Being the first development in the area, the Rideau Hall Complex established the present character of the neighborhood. As the terminus of the ceremonial route from Parliament Hill, and a clearly demarcated precinct within its decorative gates and fences, the Rideau Hall Complex is a well-known landmark to the people of Canada and is a dominant influence within its more immediate neighbourhood.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Rideau Hall Complex to be respected include:

Its role as the official residence of the Crown's representative in Canada, as reflected in:

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- The distinct vice-regal quality of the Mackay Castle and the high significance of its grounds, including the surviving park, gardens and woods, drawn from the tradition of a 19th-century English country estate in the Picturesque style.

Its very good aesthetic values, functional design, and craftsmanship as a whole, as evidenced by:

- The evolutionary character of the Rideau Hall Complex, accentuated from 1865 to 1927 and including the additions to the Mackay Castle, the construction of outbuildings and improvements to the grounds, in keeping with the English Picturesque landscape design tradition;
- The compatibility of the outbuildings, in terms of scale and architectural design, in relation to the vice-regal character of the Mackay Castle and the picturesque landscape setting;
- The elements linked to the official functions of the estate, in particular the Main Gate, the Gate Lodge, the Mackay Castle, the Governor General's private gardens and the ceremonial trees;
- The service buildings grouped in the north sector and illustrating the former workings of the estate, notably the Stable Building, the Gasometer (Dome Building) and the Dairy Building;
- The remaining features related to leisure activities, such as the cricket pitch and Cricket Pavilion, the tennis courts and Tennis Pavilion, and the skating rink; and,
- The very good aesthetic qualities and craftsmanship of the ceremonial and gathering spaces of the Mackay Castle, and the ornamented gates and fences enclosing the property.

Its very good illustration of the application of the English Picturesque landscape design style in Canada, and in the way it established the character of the neighborhood and represents a national landmark, as demonstrated by:

- The harmonious composition of the estate grounds following the original patterns of use, with the wild northern woods, entrance park, southern open lawn, ornamental gardens, and remnants of the farm;
- The presence of the Mackay Castle at the center of the estate grounds on a rise of wooded land, with the outbuildings carefully inserted as eye-catchers into the surrounding landscape setting;
- The elements reinforcing the picturesque landscape aesthetic, including the ornamented gates and fences and the winding front entrance drive leading to the main residence; and,
- The location of the Rideau Hall Complex at the end of the ceremonial route from Parliament Hill, which reinforces its associations with the Canadian Government.

For guidance on interventions proposed for this building, please refer to the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada. For more information, contact FHBRO.

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