

Ottawa, Ontario
Victoria Building
140 Wellington Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Victoria Building was constructed in 1927-28 to the designs of Ottawa architect J. Albert Ewart. It was built by a private developer, Wellington Investments Company, set up by Gordon Cameron Edwards as part of the diversification of his lumber interests. Its major long-term tenant was the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which used the building as its national headquarters from 1938 to 1964. In 1973 it was purchased by the government of Canada, and it now houses subsidiary offices of the Senate and the Library of Parliament. The custodial department is Public Works Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 87-31.

Reason for Designation

The Victoria Building has been designated Recognized because of its role in local development and because of its relatively unaltered presence today, within an important streetscape.

The construction of the building is part of a continued shift in the early 20th century in Ottawa, away from an economy dominated by the lumber trade to one more diversified and increasingly dependent on the business of government. The multi-storied office buildings which emerged as a result of this shift changed the urban form of Ottawa. The Victoria Building in particular was so prominently located across from Parliament Hill that it influenced the federal government to take a more active role in local planning and development through the Federal District Commission. This intervention led eventually to specific height restrictions and government control.

The business of government is illustrated in the case of the Victoria Building by the eventual use of the property to house the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The development of a national radio network and later a national television network were planned and coordinated in this building, under the direction of Davidson Dunton, Alphonse Ouimet and others.

The building's exterior, of modest architectural interest, survives basically unchanged. It continues to be a substantial presence on the highly visible Wellington corridor in front of the Parliamentary precinct.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage defining of the Victoria Building is defined by the two principal façades, on Wellington and O'Connor.

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Victoria Building (Continued)

The façades are marked by the tripartite division (base, column and capital) characteristic of early multi-storey commercial blocks. The base is defined by two storeys of limestone cladding with attenuated buttresses marking the vertical piers and an elaborated entryway.

The horizontal bands of limestone and red brick on the third storey provide a transition to the simple red brick facing on the fourth through tenth floors. The upper storey is marked by the reintroduction of the limestone banding and decorative detailing, with particular emphasis on the corner bay. Fenestration is relatively simple, with tripartite transom elements in the ground floor windows, and simple two-light sash in the windows above.

The exterior form, materials and detailing of these two primary façades should be maintained, using a program of preventive maintenance. When more substantial repair or replacement is required, it should continue as far as possible the original form and finish. Repair should be favoured over replacement whenever possible, to ensure that over time the integrity of the exterior façades remains high.

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