

Ottawa, Ontario
Justice Building
Wellington Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Justice Building was built in 1935-38 to designs by Burritt and Horwood under the supervision of T.W. Fuller, Chief Architect, Department of Public Works. Public Works and Government Services Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 87-35.

Reasons for Designation

The Justice Building was designated a Recognized heritage building for its architectural merit, environmental qualities and historical associations.

Designed to provide living and working accommodation for the RCMP, the Justice Building represents a continuation of federal government expansion and an intensification of the federal role in land use within the municipality of Ottawa. Its siting and style were determined in large measure by a succession of federally commissioned planning studies initiated between 1904 and 1938 with the goal of developing Wellington Street into a grand avenue lined with monumental governmental buildings and transforming Ottawa into a worthy national capital.

The Justice Building is a very good example of the Chateau style which was commonly employed in early 20th century railway hotels and stations across Canada and which found a champion in Prime Minister Mackenzie King. The style influenced the design of a number of government and commercial buildings on Wellington Street including the adjacent Confederation Building, and is expressed here in the steep roof with its dormers and turrets, and in the well-executed carved detailing.

The Justice Building is a prominent landmark on Wellington Street, forming part of a government streetscape that displays a unity of scale, massing, materials and general design.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Justice Building resides in its massing, materials and overall exterior design, in original interior features and finishes in the main entrance vestibule and lobby, and in its site, setting and landmark qualities.

Of steel frame construction with Nepean sandstone cladding and Wallace sandstone trim, the Justice Building has an irregular plan and a high copper roof. The building is

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characterized by its irregular footprint, strong vertical emphasis, and highly textured exterior walls and roof slopes. The rhythm of projecting and recessed wall planes on the Kent Street elevation, the tall window openings and steep roof, and the many dormers are integral to the building's character and merit careful preservation. Features which relate to the chateausque style, including the pavilions, towers, and copper roof cladding are also important elements that must be retained. The integrity of the construction system should be respected.

The building is richly detailed with well-executed carving and decorative elements. The Wellington Street facade is distinguished by two oriel windows at the ground floor, carved labels over five of the fourth floor windows, and an explorer figure standing over the Wellington-Kent corner. A carved panel depicting a watchman adorns the lintel of the eastern Wellington Street entrance. The principal entrance on the Kent Street facade is distinguished by a crouching native figure, as well as the Canadian coat-of-arms and the word "Justice" incised above the lintel. Decorative elements and original materials at all elevations should be carefully preserved. Masonry repair, repointing or cleaning should only be done under the supervision of a masonry conservation consultant.

Early interior finishes and fittings, including the bronze entrance doors and screen, elevator doors, iron pendant light fixtures, handrails and radiator grills, decorative ceiling mouldings and cornice, and marble stairs leading from the vestibule to the main hall should be maintained. Several programs of renovation have altered the original layout of interior spaces, however the original central corridor plan survives and should be respected where possible.

The Justice Building's site is highly urban, with little landscaping embellishing its principal elevations. The open courtyard facing eastward should be preserved.

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