

Oshawa, Ontario  
**Col. R.S. McLaughlin Armoury**  
53 Simcoe Street North

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Oshawa Armoury was built in 1914 to designs by the Engineering Services Branch of the Department of Militia and Defence. The building continues to serve as a drill hall. The Department of National Defence is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 89-96.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The Oshawa Armoury was designated Recognized as a result of its contribution to the urban environment, its architectural merit, and its association with the provision of drill halls for the Active Volunteer Militia under Sam Hughes.

The armoury occupies a compact site bounded by streets on three sides, and is easily accessible and highly visible. The building continues to serve its original function and is a community landmark.

Under threat of war, Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia and Defence from 1911 to 1916, expedited the program of armoury construction initiated by Frederick Borden. In the interests of efficiency and cost reduction, Hughes turned over the design of the majority of armouries to his Engineering Services Branch. The Branch devised a set of standard plans based on five sizes of armouries: the Oshawa Armoury is a Type D, able to accommodate six companies. The standard designs emphasized functionality, with decorative elaboration kept to a minimum. The rectangular drill hall is the dominant feature, with the administrative block reduced in size. The Oshawa Armoury is a good example of the medium-sized Type D design, featuring square towers flanking the front facade of the drill hall. The towers and the brick and stone construction in the Oshawa Armoury are in keeping with the fortress motif symbolic of Canadian armouries. They are also of note considering the economies required by the war, and reflect the symbolic importance of these structures.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Oshawa Armoury resides in its functional design, quality materials and craftsmanship, and interior volumes and finishes.

The Oshawa Armoury clearly expresses its function in the visually dominant gable-roofed hall. The characteristic fortress motif is found in the symmetrical front facade, with its crenellated towers and low-arched entrance, in the limited fenestration particularly evident on the side elevations, and in the buttress-like pilasters on all

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elevations. The addition of vents on the drill hall roof detracts from the appearance of the structure as viewed from the side; such changes to the profile should be avoided.

The contrast between the red brick walls and the stone foundation, roof trim and window dressings is an essential part of the design aesthetic and must be carefully preserved. Repairs to the masonry should be undertaken with the assistance of a masonry expert.

The segmentally-arched windows found on the front elevation retain their original glazing pattern, but other windows have been modified. If possible, this alteration should be reversed, and care taken in future to repair or replace in kind.

The large, unobstructed interior of the drill hall is achieved through the use of steel trusses. Service rooms located at either end of the drill hall support viewing galleries above. This organization of space is characteristic of drill halls designed by the Engineering Branch in this period, and should be preserved. All early interior finishes and fabric should be maintained and repaired in kind.

Modifications to the site include the provision of a vehicular compound at one side, and of additional parking spaces on the other. Landscaping at the front of the structure provides an unobstructed view of the major facade; this should be preserved.

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