

Winnipeg, Manitoba
Federal Building
269 Main Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Winnipeg, Manitoba Federal Building was built in 1935-36 to the design of Winnipeg architect George William Northwood. It is the property of Public Works Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 89-109.

Reasons for Designation

The Winnipeg Federal Building was designated Classified for its historical, architectural and environmental significance.

One of the two largest buildings constructed under Canada's Public Works Construction Act of 1934, it represents a new type of office building that efficiently housed several departments under one roof. It was also one of a very few buildings constructed in Winnipeg during the Depression era. Little altered, the building is an excellent example of "Classical Moderne" architecture, which is characterized by formal and symmetrical composition, a sense of mass and weight, and stylized, symbolic decoration. Distinguished by regionally-inspired decoration and the use of Canadian materials, it is a physical landmark within Winnipeg and a major component of Main Street.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Winnipeg Federal Building is defined by its exterior elevations and significant interior features, and by its site, setting and landmark qualities.

The "Classical Moderne" is reflected in the Federal Building's pronounced horizontality, which is enhanced by its wide polished granite base and single storey of bush-hammered limestone, and in the contrasting verticality of the tower. The stepped massing, flat walls and stylized decoration clustered around the entrance and first floor windows are also elements that characterize it as an example of "Classical Moderne" architecture. Above are six storeys of smooth limestone walls, long rows of evenly spaced rectangular windows and a band of stylized carving. The clear juxtaposition of horizontal and vertical elements, as well as the building surfaces and decoration should be carefully maintained and repaired.

The lobby is richly decorated, with patterned marble floors, elevator surrounds, stone light brackets, gilded ceiling beams, glazing above the main entrance and off the lobby, stairwell walls of buff Manitoba limestone, marble steps and bronze and glass railing. These elements merit careful repair and restoration as required.

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Physically the Federal Building is an attractive, prominently sited building whose age, appearance, location and public function combine to make it a major component of downtown Winnipeg. Its role is best preserved through the retention of a range of federal or related public activities.

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