555 Booth Street

The Chemical and Radioactive Ores Building was constructed in 1955-57. It was designed by the Building Construction Branch of the Department of Public Works for the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys. The building is currently used for laboratory research and administration. Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) is the custodian. See FHBRO Case File No. 92-43.

Reasons for Designation

The Chemical and Radioactive Ores Building has been designated "Recognized" because of its historical associations, its architectural style and its environmental significance.

As part of the NRCan complex of buildings, the Chemical and Radioactive Ores Building reflects the significant role played by that department in the exploration and mapping of Canada and the development of the mining sector. The building testifies to the post-Second World War acceleration of mineral exploration and ore testing by the federal government. It is also associated with the pioneering of many new techniques in the area of radioactivity, and with Arvid Thunaes and Dr. E. A. Brown who advanced new approaches in the recovery of radioactive materials from ore samples. The siting of the complex is an example of the relocation of federal government offices out of the central core of Ottawa, based on the recommendations of the Gréber plan.

The International Style was used extensively by the federal government during the period of unprecedented expansion in which this building was constructed. It is a good example of the style, which promoted clean lines, legible structure, an asymmetrically balanced composition and a building form determined by functional requirements.

The building contributes to the campus-like setting of the NRCan complex through its complementary massing and formal relationship with adjacent buildings. The landscaped open spaces between the buildings were part of the original design intent for the complex. This characteristic has been maintained and enhanced in the years since the building's construction.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Chemical and Radioactive Ores Building resides in its massing, composition, materials, internal planning and site relationships.

The Chemical and Radioactive Ores Building has a U-shaped plan consisting of long three and four-storey wings extending from a prominent vertical stair block that anchors the design. The main entrance is located at a corner of the building, and is distinct from

the larger main wings by virtue of its lower volume and polished black granite surrounds which extend around the basement level. The distinctive volumes and asymmetrical massing are characteristic of the International Style and should be maintained.

Of steel frame construction, the building is largely finished in brick veneer. The facades have a pronounced horizontal emphasis created by bands of aluminium windows with prominent stone sills and projecting overhead *brises-soleil*. This horizontal emphasis is a significant element of the building's heritage character and should be protected. The metal window frames and the glazing patterns are typical of the period and should be respected in any repair or replacement.

International Style buildings typically feature the use of a limited range of sleek, hard-surfaced and high-quality materials, and spare detailing. This building's broad expanses of blank wall, absence of decoration, and use of polished stone, steel and glass at the entrance are characteristic of the style, and merit protection. Interior finishes are also typical of the style and the era: terrazzo floors in the hallways, and linoleum, tile and terrazzo in offices. With any future rehabilitation or upgrading of the interior, consideration could be given to continuing the characteristic choice of materials.

The setting of the Chemical and Radioactive Ores Building is a landscaped campus formed by a group of buildings that are individually distinct in their detailing, yet form a cohesive unit. The open spaces were designed to complement and integrate the buildings and provide a transitional buffer zone for the surrounding properties. This character should be protected.

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice.*

2001.03.05