

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA BUILDING, SARNIA, ON

FHBRO number: **00-201**
DFRP number: **10816**
Resource name: **Government of Canada Building (Sarnia GOCB)**
Address: **105 Christina South Street, Sarnia, ON**
FHBRO status: **“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building**
Construction: **1956-1960**
Designer: **Architectural firm of Riddle, Connor and Associates**
Original function: **Various Government of Canada departments**
Current function: **Various Government of Canada departments and other tenants**
Modifications: **Minor alterations**
Custodian: **Public Works and Government Services Canada**

Reasons for Designation

The Sarnia GOCB is a “Recognized” Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

Historical value:

The Sarnia GOCB is associated with the post-WWII expansion of federal services. Built to house several major government tenants, the Sarnia GOCB also illustrates the boom years of the community, specifically the growth of the local economy due to the development of the Petro Chemical industry in Sarnia. This period in the community’s history was also characterized by the annexation of parts of the Township and the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, and as a result, the Sarnia GOCB functioned as more of a regional service center than as a town facility.

Architectural value:

A more progressive interpretation of the International Style relative to other federal buildings of the same period, the Sarnia GOCB consists of a flat-roofed, two-storey building that features curtain walls on three of its elevations, a subtle asymmetry in the placement and treatment of its entrances, and two-storey blind accent walls clad in panels of black polished granite. The Sarnia GOCB consists of a subtle, well-conceived composition of rectilinear volumes that expresses the functional form of the structure and the building’s program. Characterized by regularity and subtle variation, the exterior elevations of the Sarnia GOCB are constructed of high quality, non-traditional materials and skilled craftsmanship.

Environmental value:

The Sarnia GOCB occupies almost an entire city block in a transitional area at the south end of downtown Sarnia. Located between the waterfront zone to the west and a general commercial zone to the east, north, and south, the Sarnia GOCB is compatible with its mixed use setting. The largest and most prominent federal facility in the center of the city, the Sarnia GOCB is well known both locally and in the region.

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Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements of the Sarnia GOCB should be respected:

Its role as an illustration of the post-WWII expansion of federal services is reflected in:

- the design of the building conveys an image of efficiency.

Its progressive interpretation of the International Style, high quality materials and skilled craftsmanship as manifested in:

- the horizontal massing and composition which consists of simple rectilinear volumes that express the building's functional program;
- the subtle asymmetrical placement and treatment of the building's entrances;
- the balanced and slightly irregular modular grid design of the aluminum curtain wall;
- the horizontality and rhythm of the curtain wall's fenestration pattern which consists of long bands of windows separated by strips of blue porcelain-enamelled spandrel panels;
- the expression of the curtain wall as a "thin membrane" composed of glass and porcelain enamel panels supported by a structural grid of thin aluminum ribs or mullions between each window, and set into bays demarcated by wider, pilaster-like aluminum ribs;
- the non-traditional use of polished, black granite to create the smooth, flat unadorned surfaces of the blind, two-storey accent walls or end walls, the entrance surrounds, the chimney, the penthouse of the elevator shaft, and the foundation line;
- the detailing and installation of the high-polish aluminum curtain wall and blue porcelain-enamelled spandrel panels; and,
- the use of terrazzo flooring and light brown marble on the walls of the principal lobbies and staircases, and polished aluminum for the postal boxes and stair railings.

The compatibility of the building with the mixed use character of this transitional area of the city as evidenced in:

- the building's visual prominence and strong federal presence owing to its scale, design and materials.

For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*. For further information contact FHBRO.

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