

Ottawa, Ontario
Connaught Building
550 Sussex Drive

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Connaught Building was constructed between 1913 and 1916 to the designs of Chief Architect David Ewart. Built to house the new Ottawa Customs Examining warehouse and offices for the Departments of Customs and Internal Revenue, it was one of a group of impressive buildings constructed in Ottawa in this period to house significant national institutions or government offices. The building continues to be occupied by Revenue Canada. The custodial department is Public Works Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 87-39.

Reasons for Designation

The Connaught Building has been designated as Classified heritage property primarily because of its architectural significance, representing as it does one of the best works of David Ewart, chief architect of the Department of Public Works from 1897 to 1914. It also has important historical associations with the development of a stronger federal presence in the capital, and continues to be an important urban landmark.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this property is defined for the most part by the exterior elevations, which were designed in the modified Tudor Gothic style favored by Ewart because of its compatibility with the Parliament Buildings and its associations with British precedent. The narrow site led to a more strongly vertical composition than in Ewart's other work. The symmetry of the massing reflects an underlying Beaux Arts layout.

It is important that the various elements which contribute to the overall composition of these façades be carefully maintained. These include the highly articulated stonework, with its buttresses, corbelling, niches, carved embellishments, and elaborate window and door surrounds; and the doors and windows themselves. The wall finish is primarily of sandstone, with a granite plinth and Wallace stone detailing. Any required repair or restoration work should be undertaken only after careful analysis of existing conditions and with attention to the use of suitable materials and detailing.

Renovations to the interior in 1973 were generally unsympathetic to the heritage character of the property. Every opportunity should be taken to reintroduce a more compatible continuity between exterior and interior, particularly in the lobbies and circulation areas, and to enhance the symmetrical, Beaux Arts intentions of the original design.

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