

Ottawa, Ontario
National Press Building
150 Wellington Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The National Press Building, originally known as the Norlite Building, was constructed in 1917-18 to the designs of W.J. Abra, Hugh A. Wright, and C.P. Meredith. It was built by the Norlite Realty Company with the expectation of renting it immediately to the federal government. In 1954 it was expropriated by the government and since the 1960s it has been leased to various media organizations and the Parliamentary Press Gallery. The custodial department is Public Works Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 87-41.

Reasons for Designation

The National Press Building has been designated a Recognized heritage property because of its role in the historical evolution of the Wellington street corridor from commercial banking corridor to federal government precinct, and because of its interest as an early exercise in modern office planning using newly developed building materials and technology.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this property is defined by the front façade and by remnants of the interior layout.

The front façade exhibits the then-current tendency to apply traditional stylistic divisions to the design of tall buildings. The building has a two-storey base sheathed in Indiana limestone, and a seven-storey shaft above sheathed in terra-cotta panels. It lacks the heavy cornice characteristic of earlier buildings of this type, but did have projecting balconies under the arched windows of the top storey which would have provided a horizontal shadow line. These balconies were removed after the building was expropriated in 1952; their reinstatement would clarify the original design intentions and strengthen the appearance of the façade. The vertical division into corner bays flanking a slightly recessed center portion, a division emphasized by the towers at the roofline, is another carryover from more traditional practice.

The interior was originally open, except for the service areas, and was provided with a good deal of natural light from the large windows. These window openings have survived relatively unchanged, and the general layout, as intended, has provided flexibility for various tenant arrangements.

.../2

Ottawa, Ontario

National Press Building (Continued)

150 Wellington Street

Preservation of the façade, with a possible reinstatement of the missing balconies, and continued use of the interior for office or related functions should ensure continuity in the building's evolution and protection of its heritage character.

1988.06.29