

Sherbrooke, Québec
Government of Canada Building (GOCB)
50, Place de la Cité

The Sherbrooke GOCB was constructed between 1950 and 1954. It was designed by the Chief Architect's Branch, Department of Public Works. The windows have been replaced with reflective glass, a roof-top mechanical penthouse was added at the front (1972-73), and an access ramp was added in 1991. It was originally designed for offices and a post office and continues to house government offices. Public Works and Government Services Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 95-12.

Reasons For Designation

The Sherbrooke GOCB was designated Recognized because of its environmental significance and architectural importance, and also for its historical associations.

The Sherbrooke GOCB is part of the central business area reinforcing the mixed fabric along King Street while also facing an adjacent square. It is prominently sited on a hill and the high standards of the design and construction reinforce the importance of the building within the community. The presence of federal services and the building's former use as a post office have contributed to its community landmark status.

The striking presence of the building is a result of its classically based design and monumental, symmetrical massing with spare detailing of classical and Art Deco inspiration. The modern expression of simple volumes and smooth surfaces contrasts with the fluted pilasters and tripartite articulation of the facades, which reflect both its modern and traditional antecedents and contribute to its visual interest.

The building is associated with the increasing growth in population and prosperity following World War II and the expansion of facilities for the provision of new federal services. The construction of the building reflects the growth of Sherbrooke and the shifting economy as it developed into a regional service and administration centre in the 1950s.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Sherbrooke GOCB resides in its overall massing, monumental proportions, construction materials, architectural details, and site relationships.

Characteristic of the transitional design, the building reflects a combination of

streamlined modern detailing with a simplified interpretation of classical architecture. The three-storey flat-roofed structure has a simple rectangular massing and footprint. The corner site is subtly expressed by a slightly more prominent end pavilion. The monumentally scaled long facade features a classically inspired tripartite division of base, body and cornice with a central entrance portico, end pavilions, and giant pilasters dividing the bays. The stepped massing of volumes, the use of smooth surfaces, minimal window trims, low-relief carving, and rounded returns at the entrances enhance the streamlined 'modern' expression. The massing, footprint, roof profile and facade relationships should be respected.

The facades are executed in matte finished light granite with minor carved detailing (ribbed pilasters, the shield, and low relief work) at the entrances. Polished dark granite is used for the base, and to accent features like some of the copings, curved entrance returns, and ribbed canopy projections. These details and the subtle colour and textural contrast reflect Art Deco design inspiration and should be respected. The masonry, including the brickwork of the rear of the building, would benefit from conservation expertise for repairs and ongoing maintenance.

The windows and doors are modern replacements: the large scale of the glazing simplifies the visual richness of a traditional frame and sash profile, and the use of mirrored glass is inappropriate. At the end of their life, historical research should be used to determine appropriate window and door replacements.

The entrances and interior finishes display a hierarchial planning which reflects the underlying classicism of the design: the public spaces have higher quality finishes like marble dados, patterned terrazzo flooring, decorative ceiling plasterwork, and aluminum framing for doors and windows. The more functional finishes of the non-public spaces should also be preserved and maintained.

The street frontages are hard-surfaced, which contributes to the characteristic crisp, clean relationship between the building and the ground plane typical of institutional buildings and should be maintained. Planters and plant material which have been introduced are appropriate because of they do not obscure the building facades.

97.06.30

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