

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

VIMY BARRACKS #B-16 (FORDE BUILDING), CFB KINGSTON

FHBRO number: **94-013**
DFRP number: **09407**
Resource name: **Vimy Barracks, Forde Building, B-16**
Address: **CFB Kingston, Barriefield, Ontario**
FHBRO status: **“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building**
Construction : **1935**
Designer : **Department of National Defence, Canada (no individual identified)**
Original function : **Administrative building**
Current function : **Administrative building**
Modifications : **Minor cladding, window, and interior adjustments**
Custodian : **Department of National Defence**

Reasons for Designation

Building B-16, Vimy Barracks (Forde Building) is a “Recognized” Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

Historical value:

The Forde Building is integral to the establishment and construction of the Communications School of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. Colonel Elroy Forde joined the Signals Corps in 1909 and thereafter campaigned for the continuing development of Signals and for its permanent home. He was Director of Signals when the building’s cornerstone was laid in 1935, and to his retirement in 1942. The building is part of the complex built under the Public Works Construction Act of 1934, consolidating the Corps and School, and belatedly recognizing the essential service of signals, in particular wireless communications, for both military and non-military national service after World War I. The three primary themes for its historical value are (1) the creation of modern technologies for Canadian national defence and public service after World War I, (2) the transformation of military services for new national commitments after 1918, and (3) the renewal of traditional federal activity in capital construction. The Forde Building, defining one face of the main Parade Square, is integral to the original Vimy Barracks plan.

Architectural value:

The Forde Building is a two-and-half-storey “I”-plan block of concrete and steel construction with masonry infills, clad in white-painted stucco. The flat-roofed elevations of the block are articulated by end pavilions that rise above and project in front of the long elevations at front and rear. The elevations comprise a series of paired window openings at each floor, slightly set back within shallow two-storey recesses — framed by shallow pilasters topped by a plain frieze — rising from the slightly projecting plinth that encases the high-ceilinged basement storey.

The building’s entrances are centered in each facade. The principal entrance on the broad north frontage facing the Parade Ground is a recessed double doorway up a stone staircase, between narrow single-storey chamfered half-turrets with loophole windows. The entry is accentuated by a full-height projecting bay with an elevated parapet and vertical accent bands. The east and west elevations emulate this treatment, each with a central projecting bay that steps out and draws attention to a ground-level entrance in a five-bay elevation. The south elevation echoes the north, excepting the central portion, which has a plain recessed bay and a ground-level link to B-17 immediately south. The exterior generally retains its original appearance, though its walls have had external insulation and new stucco applied. With the exception of the decorative top-light over the front doorway, the original industrial-style steel-

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT VIMY BARRACKS #B-16 (FORDE BUILDING), CFB KINGSTON

frame windows with awning openings have been replaced by vertical-sliding units and blank upper panels. The interior comprises double-loaded corridors with offices and service rooms on both sides, and larger higher-ceilinged classroom spaces in the end pavilions. Interior spaces have been modified over time, but the stairs and hallways retain wood and terrazzo details from the original state of the building. The overall effect is a hybrid of a contemporary industrial office block with Art-Deco styled battlements. While its overall form and material echo those of other constructions of the period, the details and siting of the Forde Building give it an enhanced presence in its spatial context.

Environmental value:

The primary formal elevation of the Forde Building on Byng Avenue is centered on the southern end of the Parade Square, a gently sloping paved quadrangle notable for its formal, functional and ceremonial roles at the heart of the Vimy Barracks, with McKee Hall (B-6) aligned at the opposite end. To the south and west is a complex of working structures of different periods and functions, and to the east are generally open areas with sporting grounds. The former gymnasium (B-17), contemporary to the Forde Building, is joined to the south front, the whole comprising a T in plan. A circular drive leads to the main entrance, and paved areas abut the building to the west and southwest. Cropped lawns with some decorative plantings and mature trees of several species screen its other elevations and corners.

Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements of the Forde Building (B-16) should be respected:

Its role as an illustration of the expansion, modernization and diversification of the Canadian military in peacetime as reflected in:

- its essential relationship to the transformation of military functions and facilities in its period;
- its improved standard of robust, durable construction and of amenity for its users;
- its longstanding functional and architectural role as Corps and School headquarters; and
- its location and formality within the original plan and landscape of the Vimy Barracks.

Its combination of architectural modernism and traditional stylistic association in a functional, durable and economical form as manifested in:

- the overall horizontal emphasis of building plan and massing complemented by its vertically accentuated profiles and detailing;
- the symmetrical principal elevation, its emphasized end pavilions and its elaborated central bay, with accented parapet, and battlemented formal entranceway;
- the symmetrical secondary elevations, with their elaborated central entrance bays;
- the hybrid modernistic style, a distinctive combination of aspects of modern neoclassicism with Art-Deco interpretations of battlemented style.

The manner in which it reinforces the formally planned character of the setting as evidenced in:

- its symmetrically formal orientation to and definition of the original Vimy Barracks plan; and
- its relationship to a functionally and formally allied building group of different periods.

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

December 2003