**Customs Building**
Route 147
Stanhope, Québec

The Customs Building was constructed in 1954-55. It was designed by Montréal architect, J.F. DeBelleval. It was designed as a customs-excise building and maintains this use. A large garage was added to the rear in 1971-72, and exteriors and interiors have been heavily altered including replacement of glass block windows and the front canopy. Revenue Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 91-95.

## Reasons For Designation

The Customs Building was designated Recognized because of its architectural importance and environmental significance as well as its historical associations.

Executed in the International Modern Style, this building is a handsome and progressive example of post-war architecture. It features strong, geometric forms comprised of rectilinear masses which reflect the various of functions of bus terminal, warehouse, and customs. The well proportioned elevations employ a simple palette of high quality building materials (granite, glass, aluminum) expressing the importance and prestige associated with a federal building.

The easy vehicular site access for cross border traffic reflects the efficient and pragmatic site planning at the Customs Building. The simple relationship of the building to the surrounding surfaces contributes to its prominence. The building located on a rise in the ground, is a feature of the surrounding agrarian landscape. It is familiar to travellers because it is one of the top three customs-excise ports in Québec.

Historically, the Customs Building is associated with the establishment of a federal presence on the Canadian border.

## Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Customs Building resides in features expressing the International Modern Style including; stepped massing, proportions, and construction materials, as well as site relationships.

The International Modern Style stressed asymmetrical compositions of simple, geometrical forms, the preference for flat-roofed, horizontal, or rectangular shapes, and an overall sleek expression of materials. The asymmetrical composition of horizontal and vertical forms of the two-storey flat-roofed structure contributes to the sleek geometrical design. The stepped massing, footprint and profile should be maintained.

The simple frame of the main canopy is somewhat over-scaled for the design and should be modified to reflect historic precedent. The large-scale garage massing at the rear undermines somewhat the original clarity of the design composition which was a series of smaller-scaled masses.

The facade materials and finishes are expressive of the International Modern Style which stressed smooth, flat, polished materials, and simple geometrical forms with minimal detailing. The streamlined, modern styling of the elevations is found in the smooth, flat, surface planes of light coloured, granite cladding which is carefully detailed using wide and narrow coursing. The variety of window openings and placement correspond to interior functions and contribute to the bold, functionally-driven asymmetrical appearance of the facades and should be respected. The design stresses subtle colour and textural contrasts to emphasize the volumes of the forms a characteristic of the style to be respected. The prominent bands of dark metal parapet flashing detract from the simple expression of the forms. The scale, proportions, and material does not reflect the original design intentions which were to have a simple linear coping. When at the end of its life it should be altered to follow historic precedent. The masonry would benefit from an ongoing maintenance program.

The large glazed metal sashed windows are recent and the visual richness of the original glass block module and the window frame and sash profiles are greatly simplified with the new windows with increased glazed areas. The original windows reflected tenets of the International Modern Style, as they varied to suit functional requirements and glass block was used. The heritage character has been compromised by the loss of the glass block panels and the original windows. Historic research should be used to determine appropriate replacements for the existing units when the time comes.

The interior materials and finishes which reflect the original construction should be preserved and incorporated in any future use of the space.

The hard-surfaced ground plane is a functional element characteristic of sites for this type of facility, and should be maintained. The scale and material finishes of the principal facades at grade contribute positively to the pedestrian experience of the site. The planting island with its concrete curbing should be maintained.

97.03.04

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