

Belleville, Ontario  
**Armoury**  
Bridge Street

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Belleville Armoury was built in 1907-08 to designs by the Department of Public Works under T.W. Fuller. A gun-shed was added in 1936. The building continues to serve as a drill hall. The Department of National Defence is the custodial department. See FHBRO Building Report 91-1 85.

### **Reason for Designation**

The Belleville Armoury was designated Recognized as a result of its association with the expansion of the Active Volunteer Militia under Frederick Borden, its architectural merit, and its contribution to the historic streetscape.

As Minister of Militia and Defence from 1896 to 1911, Frederick Borden undertook the reform and expansion of the Canadian militia. To facilitate training and improve munitions, he initiated a program of construction of new armouries and drill halls across the country. Among them was the Armoury in Belleville, built at a time of growth in the city. The structure retains its original function and its continuous association with the Hastings and Prince Edward County Regiment, known for its numerous battle honours.

The Belleville Armoury is a good example of the synthesis of functional design with aesthetic expression typical of Fuller's standard armoury design. The function of the separate elements is clearly articulated in the profile - a large gambrel-roofed drill hall is fronted by a two-storey, flat-roofed pavilion housing ancillary services such as offices, classrooms, and mess hall. A later single-storey gun shed is tucked behind the administrative block on the east side of the drill hall. Typical of Fuller's aesthetic approach to armouries, the structure is evocative of a medieval fortress. This is achieved through solid brick construction, stone detailing, and the use of three-story towers flanking the entrance of the administrative block.

The Armoury faces a major commercial street across its now-landscaped parade ground. The imposing structure contributes significantly to the historic core of Belleville, and is a well-known local landmark.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of this structure is defined by its external massing and characteristic profile, functional design, detailing, quality materials and craftsmanship, and by the drill hall interior.

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Belleville, Ontario  
**Armoury** (Continued)  
Bridge Street

The Belleville Armoury reflects Fuller's standard design with its original drill hall and entry block. The later gun shed, constructed with similar materials and detailing, continues Fuller's principle of expressing the structure's military function in the external form. This articulation of the functional elements should be retained. However, a small concrete-block POL shed appended to the gun shed adversely affects its appearance and should be removed. In future, care should be taken to preserve the integrity of the exterior facades.

The medieval-fortress motif, which has come to symbolize Canadian armories, is most clearly expressed in the symmetrically-organized pavilion. The towers flanking the central entrance create the effect of a medieval gate house, while the narrow vertical window openings maximize the wall area, adding to the fortresslike appearance of the structure. Medieval detailing, such as string courses, copings, battlements and window dressings in rough-cut stone, contrast in colour and texture with the red brick walls. These elements determine the aesthetic qualities of the structure's exterior and must be preserved. Repairs to the masonry should only be undertaken with the assistance of a masonry expert.

The unobstructed interior of the drill hall is achieved through the use of Fink trusses, while natural light is provided by large round-headed windows on three sides. A full-length gallery along one wall overlooks the hall, while ease of access to the exterior is provided by large doors at either end. These characteristic spatial arrangements must be preserved, and the windows, trusses, and galleries maintained and repaired in kind.

The interaction between drill-hall and administrative functions and the setting has been successfully resolved in Belleville by locating the Armoury at one end of a street block. This provides vehicular and pedestrian access to the drill hall from two side streets, while the primary facade of the administrative pavilion faces a major street. Modifications to the site, such as the creation of parking areas at each end of the drill hall, and landscaping the parade ground, do not significantly affect the monumental appearance of the Armoury. However, care should be taken to restrict development of the site, particularly as it relates to the appearance from Bridge Street.

1994.04.25