Ottawa, Ontario
Geophysical Laboratory (#3)
Central Experimental Farm

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Geophysical Laboratory was constructed to provide office and laboratory facilities for the Dominion Observatories Branch 1954-55. It was designed by Gilleland and Strutt, architects, who also designed the addition of another wing in 1960. The custodian is Natural Resources Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 92-37.

Reasons for Designation

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

The Geophysical Laboratory is an example of the International style as used for federal buildings during the mid-1950s. In keeping with this style, the massing consists of several components which reflect internal layouts. The rectilinear forms and materials have simple modern detailing and a variety of glazing types are present.

The Geophysical Laboratory is situated in the groomed park-like setting of the Observatory Campus. The style of the building provides a contrast to the older adjacent buildings, however its scale and materials are compatible.

The Geophysical Laboratory is associated with the second phase of work at the Dominion Observatory, dealing with gravity, geomagnetism and solar physics. Its construction reflects accelerated growth in these three fields of study and was part of a wave of government research buildings constructed around Ottawa. The building is associated with Dr. Morris J.S.Innes who was the director of the division developing specialized instruments for the field of geophysics.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Geophysical Laboratory resides in the building's form, its overall proportions and its International style details, its construction materials, surviving interior layout and finishes, and its relationship to the site and setting.

The building is a simple flat-roofed two storey "L" shaped structure. A two-and-a-half storey entrance block links the later sympathetic addition. The asymmetrical massing, consisting of blocks containing the entrance, an auditorium, and office/laboratories, is

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distinguished by a variety of fenestration types expressing these diverse functions. This is typical of the International style and should not be altered.

The low form and horizontal emphasis of the building is emphasized by the brick walls with stone copings, stone sills, and stone surrounds with prominent vertical panels between windows. Regular inspection and maintenance of the masonry is recommended, particularly at the entrance parapet where water damage is evident.

The original design featured wood windows and doors, with the horizontal divisions of the windows reinforcing the horizontal emphasis of the facades. The current windows in aluminum have a lower horizontal line. When the windows and doors are at the end of their service life, they should be replaced with units that are compatible with the original design intent. The intended smooth lines of the International Style design are interrupted by air conditioners projecting through windows; this should be avoided, particularly on principal facades.

The metal detailing in the simple horizontal planes of the entrance canopies, the lettering and the cast ornament above the entrance are characteristic of the style and should be retained. Research should confirm if the upper guardrail over the entrance block is an early detail; depending on its vintage, it should be altered or removed as it appears to be contributing to masonry damage.

The original central corridor plan survives, as have the laboratory/office layouts. These should continue to be respected. The original interior finishes are largely extant and should be retained and incorporated into any new work.

The site has a simple manicured character that is appropriate to the building, however overgrown foundation planting should be minimized to maintain the prominence and clarity of the built forms. Site access and the footprint of the building are relatively unchanged and should be maintained. Stairs and handrails are simply detailed and compatible with the modern design.

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