

Thunder Bay, Ontario
Revenue Canada Building
201 May Street North

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Revenue Canada building in Thunder Bay was constructed in 1913-15 to plans prepared by the Chief Architect's Office of the Department of Public Works. It accommodated customs services until being taken over by Revenue Canada in the 1960s. Public Works & Government Services Canada is the custodian. See EHBRO Building Report 89-149.

Reasons for Designation

The Revenue Canada building was designated Recognized because of its architectural design and environmental significance, and also for historical reasons.

The impressive three-storey stone and brick building is a very good example of Beaux-Arts Classicism, a style commonly used by Public Works for public institutions in the early 20th century. Prominently located on a corner site, the Revenue Canada building stands at the edge of a residential area and a commercial sector of the city, and is well known locally.

The building reflects the unprecedented prosperity and optimism of the pre-war years, as well as the expansion of east-west trade and the economic importance of customs activities. The city of Fort William (now Thunder Bay) was one of the world's largest grain-handling ports and a major trade and transportation transshipment point and railway terminal. Locally, the federal presence was increased by expanding services in the community, and by providing well designed, up-to-date facilities.

Character Defining Features

The heritage character of the Revenue Canada building resides in its Beaux-Arts design, in its monumental massing, materials and detailing, in its symmetrical composition, in its extant interior details, and in its relationship to its site and setting.

A steel-and-concrete, stone-clad box of rectangular plan, the Thunder Bay Revenue Canada building exhibits the strong horizontal division of base, body, and cornice that is typical of the Beaux-Arts. The use of pale limestone veneer and granite accents on the two principal elevations, and the presence of such classically-inspired features as two-storey paired pilasters separating two-storey arch-topped windows, rusticated corner pilasters, a massive entablature, and a central pedimented entryway within a shallow frontispiece are also characteristic features. The scale, proportion, arrangement and materials of these features are integral to the Beaux-Arts formality and monumentality of this building and must be respected. The rear and north

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Revenue Canada Building (Cont'd)

elevations are less conspicuous, and could be handled with more flexibility; however, alterations or additions that would interfere with the pure box-like profile must be resisted.

The current fenestration has been altered from the original designs; when upgrading is required, the original fenestration and paneling patterns for the principal facades should be confirmed and replacement units of a compatible design installed.

The interior layout has been modified for office use, and nondescript modern finishes installed. The original iron staircase with marble steps survives, as do some finishes in the core area (main entrance, lobby and elevator). These should be retained, as should major patterns of access and circulation which recall the original plan.

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