

## HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

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FHBRO 98-043

DFRP Number 12525

### **Recognized Federal Heritage Building**

PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, Manitoba

### **Portage la Prairie Armoury**

143 - 2nd Street

The Portage la Prairie Armoury was constructed in 1912-13 to a Department of Public Works (DPW) departmental plan issued by the office of the Chief Architect, David Ewart. Changes to the building include interior partitioning, new windows, accessible washrooms, an elevator (housed in an addition on the north elevation) and an exterior ramp. A single-storey, stucco-sided building with a low-pitched gable roof is attached to the north end of the Armoury. The Department of National Defence is the custodian.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The Portage la Prairie Armoury has been designated “Recognized” because of its historical, architectural and environmental significance:

#### Historical Significance

The Portage la Prairie Armoury illustrates the reform and expansion of the Canadian militia between 1896 and the outbreak of the First World War. It was constructed in an era of enormous optimism, prosperity and growth, when the federal government strengthened its presence and met increasing expectations for services through a major construction program. These themes are expressed in the building’s scale, design, layout and function as a combined militia and federal building. Additional value is derived from its service as the home of the 1 3<sup>th</sup> Field Battery, a distinguished military unit established in 1871.

#### Architectural Significance

The design of the Portage la Prairie Armoury is more typical of medium-sized federal public buildings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, than of contemporary military architecture. The high volume of government construction had led to greater standardization of design and an increasing emphasis on simplification and economy. In keeping with these trends, the Portage la Prairie Armoury is constructed of brick, rather than stone. Decorative detailing is concentrated on the main entrance. Visual impact is achieved through simple massing and the highly regular arrangement of openings. Cut-stone dressings add detail and give visual definition to the facades. The building is solidly constructed and satisfactorily accommodates its ongoing military and office functions. The Armoury’s good condition testifies to the solid quality of its materials and craftsmanship.

#### Environmental Significance

An attractive building in an area of newer, residential construction, the Portage la Prairie Armoury establishes an official presence in its neighbourhood. It is well known and highly regarded within the community.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Portage la Prairie Armoury resides in the following character- defining

elements:

- The relatively simple design, absence of decorative detailing except around the main entrance, and brick construction of the Armoury, in keeping with the government building program's emphasis on simplification and economy.
- The simple massing of the building and the highly regular arrangement of openings.
- The imposing front facade and the emphasis placed on the projecting central bay, which contains the main door, surrounded by elaborate detailing and surmounted by an ornamented rounded window. Ornamental stone details, which include an elaborate carved header over the main door, keystones over the windows, and a cornice which projects from the wall below the flat roof, contribute to the building's visual appeal and interest.
- The unrestricted, straight-on view of the main facade from the street.

All maintenance and repair work, as well as future interventions, should respect these character-defining elements.

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