

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT EDWARD DRAKE BUILDING, OTTAWA, ON

FHBRO number:	01-049
DFRP number:	57718
Resource name:	Edward Drake Building
Address:	1500 Bronson Road, Ottawa, ON
FHBRO status:	“Classified” Federal Heritage Building
Construction:	1961-1964
Designer:	David Gordon McKinstry, Chief Architect of the CBC
Original function:	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Head Office
Current function:	Communications Security Establishment
Modifications:	Original wood and aluminum hopper sash and window frames replaced with sealed smoked-glass windows; interior alterations resulting in the loss of the fifth floor theatre, the sixth floor boardroom and the quiet rooms.
Custodian:	Public Works and Government Services Canada

Reasons for Designation

The Edward Drake Building is a “Classified” Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

Historical value:

The Edward Drake Building is associated with the centralization of the administration of a national public broadcasting network. The Edward Drake Building was designed as part of the consolidation of the ever-expanding national offices of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation from various buildings located around Ottawa’s downtown core to one larger building. The Edward Drake Building is also a later example of the development of Confederation Heights as a new urban node of federal institutions in Ottawa.

Architectural value:

The Edward Drake Building is one of the best examples of Canadian modern architecture, particularly in its representation of the expressionist strain of modernism. The former CBC Head Office is a six-storey, flat roofed reinforced concrete and steel structure with a flared “Y”-shaped footprint that features a flared white roof and entrance canopy, glazed elevations with granite spandrel panels, and monumental, blind stone-clad wing walls. Designed by David Gordon McKinstry, the Chief Architect of the CBC and a renowned acoustician, the functional design of the Edward Drake Building is characterized by a “quiet” ventilation system, an efficient interior layout consisting of offices, each of which has its own window, centrally located services, and the stairwells at the building wingtips. The Edward Drake Building is constructed of luxurious, high quality materials particularly on the exterior facades and at the interior of the entrance pavilion, and features a high level of craftsmanship and sophisticated detailing.

Environmental value:

The Edward Drake Building is located in an open, modern park-like landscape, at the crest of a hill on Bronson Avenue, and is accessed by its own driveway. The Edward Drake Building reinforces the sophisticated urban character of the campus-like setting of Confederation Heights through its striking and unique form, and its luxurious materials. Its modern landscaping remains virtually unchanged since its construction. The Edward Drake Building has a strong presence in the landscape and is visible from many vantage points, particularly along the road to and from the

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airport, making it a visual landmark to visitors to Ottawa, as well as a familiar landmark to the community of Confederation Heights and the residents of Ottawa.

Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements of the Edward Drake Building should be respected:

Its role as an illustration of the centralization of the administration of a national public broadcasting network is reflected in:

- the building's architectural design which was purpose-built for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Its modern, expressionist aesthetic, functional design, and the high quality materials and fine craftsmanship as manifested in:

- the building's monumental scale and sculptural quality;
- the geometric purity of the building's unique, flared "Y"-shaped form and the sophistication of the three, identical parabolic elevations;
- the horizontality expressed in the glazed curtain walls with dark mullions, the granite spandrel panels which create a banding effect, the use of subtle metal banding at the roofline, and the recessed penthouse and flared roof canopy;
- the play between the transparency of the horizontal, glazed curtain walls and the solidity of the vertical, windowless and monumental stone-clad wing walls;
- the dynamic and expressive qualities of the flared "Y"-shaped, white concrete roof canopy on pilotis and the entrance pavilion's stand-alone, flared white concrete canopy;
- the acoustic design of the building's "quiet" ventilation system;
- the efficiency of the interior layout owing to the centrally located services, the placement of the lozenge-shaped stairwells at the wingtips, and the placement of the columns which optimize floor space and allow each of the offices to have its own window;
- the use of luxurious, high quality exterior materials which convey the prestige of the institution such as the "Kingston Hue" Canadian sandstone in sand-honed finish on the slab-like wing walls and for inlays at the entrance pavilion, and the complex installation of the "Stanstead Grey" granite spandrel panels on the parabolic elevations;
- the sophistication of the detailing at the entrance pavilion including the "Stanstead Grey" granite stepped base which is engraved with the Greek key pattern; and,
- the use of teak, stainless steel, Carrera marble, marble terrazzo flooring and "Radio Black" marble for the interior of the entrance pavilion and lobby.

The manner in which the building reinforces the sophisticated urban character of the campus-like setting of Confederation Heights as evidenced in:

- its location in an open, modern, park-like landscape which allows it to be viewed as an object in-the-round from many vantage points;
- its striking appearance owing to its unique, sculptural form, monumental scale, and luxurious materials; and,
- its visual landmark value owing to its location at the crest of a hill, at this prominent location within Confederation Heights, and along Bronson Avenue near the approaches to the Ottawa Airport Parkway.

For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*. For further information contact FHBRO. January 2003