

**FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS REVIEW OFFICE (FHBRO)
HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

FHBRO number:	98-41
DFRP number:	07611
Resource name:	Bisson Centre
Address:	115 Bisson St., Gatineau, Quebec
Construction:	1958; 1992-1993: major interior renovations
Original function:	Marie-Médiatrice classical college (1958-1967)
Current function:	Centre for Language Training, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Custodian:	Public Works and Government Services Canada
FHBRO status:	“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building

Reasons for Designation

The Bisson Centre is a “Recognized” Federal Heritage Building chiefly because of its environmental value and, to a lesser extent, its architectural qualities.

Historical value

The historical value of the Bisson Centre is associated with its original use as a classical college for boys. As an indirect consequence of the educational reform of the 1960s in Quebec, which led to the creation of a public college system, Marie-Médiatrice college, a private institution, had to close its doors in 1967 for financial reasons.

Architectural value

The Bisson Centre is a testimony to the functionalist approach that marked the post-war design of educational institutions, when integration in the urban setting and human scale prevailed over the desire for monumental buildings. Its cubic, asymmetric massing, facing of pitted brick, high percentage of glassed surfaces (to take best advantage of natural light) and slightly recessed entrance portal make it an elegant building which is respectful of the residential neighbourhood where it is located. The interior layout of this former college is just as rational and “thoughtful”, with the concern for detail evident even in the modular lines of the partitions, which often define the wooden libraries.

Environmental value

The Bisson Centre stands in a vast landscape adjacent to Lac des Fées Park. Its moderate scale (four storeys) harmonizes well with that of the residential neighbourhood where it is situated. Because of the proximity of Lac des Fées Park and the fact that many of the region’s “baby boomers” are alumni of this institution, the Bisson Centre enjoys a degree of prestige with the local population.

Character-Defining Elements

- The functional design of this building, which is on an L-plan and whose cubic, irregular massing is expressive of the various internal functions.
- The fenestration, which also takes various forms, depending on the section of the building; it is judiciously designed and testifies to the architect's concern for natural lighting.
- The openness characteristic of the building's points of access, especially the main entrance with its open lobby at full height.
- The pitted-brick effect lends a special texture to the exterior (very much in the 1950-60s style).
- The many openings, which decompartmentalize the interior spaces to some degree (they were used to supervise the students at work).
- The treatment of the interior partitions, where the slightest detail is carefully designed to harmonize with the whole; this includes the alternation of the various materials (brick and white plaster) as well as the modular composition, which often integrates wooden bookcases echoing the doors, also made of wood.
- The harmonious relationship of the building with its site and with the surrounding residential area.

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

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