



Some Facts and Figures

The Department was established in 1909, and was originally situated above a barber shop on Bank Street in downtown Ottawa. In 1914, headquarters moved to the East Block on Parliament Hill, where it remained for nearly 60 years. By the time planning for the new building began in 1964, the Department had significantly outgrown its existing facilities.

Considerable care went into the choice of a site. The location chosen was on Sussex Drive, which forms part of the ceremonial route that links the residences of the Prime Minister and the Governor General to Parliament Hill. Across the street are Earnscliffe, once the home of Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, and now the residence of the British High Commissioner, as well as the original headquarters of the National Research Council. On the other bank of the Rideau River is Ottawa's City Hall, and the embassies of Japan and France are nearby on Sussex Drive.

The Lester B. Pearson Building was opened on August 1, 1973, by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Designed by the architectural firm Webb, Zeraka, Menkes to meet a municipal height limit of 50 metres, the building comprises four blocks or towers containing some 55 000 square metres of floor space, connected by an enclosed lobby. The main entrance features massive bronze doors, each weighing about 400 kilograms.

The lobby and adjacent area houses a conference complex, bank, library, Client Services Centre, Health Unit, InfoCentre and cafeteria, which are used by the 2500 people who work in the building, and are open to the public. Visitors to the cafeteria will notice a unique work of art entitled Veneration of the White Collar Worker, by noted Canadian artist Gathe Falk.

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