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File No. ACS2025-PDB-RHU-0015

June 11, 2025

His Excellency Di Wang  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the People's Republic of China  
515 St. Patrick Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1N 5H3

**RECEIVED**  
2025/06/11  
(YYYY/MM/DD)  
Ontario Heritage Trust

Your Excellency,

**RE: Designation of 251 Besserer Street under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act***

This letter is to advise you that Ottawa City Council, at its meeting of May 28, 2025, approved the following recommendation in respect of the above-noted item:

**That Council issue a Notice of Intention to Designate 251 Besserer Street under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act according to the Statement of Cultural Heritage Value.**

A copy of the complete report in this matter, as well as the minutes of the City Council meeting of May 28, 2025, can be found on the City's website at [ottawa.ca/agendas](http://ottawa.ca/agendas).

Enclosed is the Notice of Intention to Designate, served according to the *Ontario Heritage Act*, to be published online at [Ottawa.ca/heritagenotices](http://Ottawa.ca/heritagenotices) on June 11, 2025. You will have 30 days from the publication date, until July 11, 2025, to file an objection to the designation. Should you wish to object to the designation, you may do so by submitting a notice of objection in writing, outlining the reasons for the objection and any other relevant information. The notice must be received by the Clerk of the City of Ottawa within 30 days after the online publication of this notice.

Office of the City Clerk  
City of Ottawa  
110 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1  
[ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca)

Direct Line (613) 580-2424 Ext. 28136  
[caitlin.salter-macdonald@ottawa.ca](mailto:caitlin.salter-macdonald@ottawa.ca)

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The notice of objection can be submitted via email to [CityClerk-HeritageObjections@ottawa.ca](mailto:CityClerk-HeritageObjections@ottawa.ca), or via registered mail or in-person delivery, by appointment, at the following coordinates:

Caitlin Salter MacDonald, City Clerk  
c/o Andrew El-Azzi, Committee Coordinator  
110 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1J1, mail code 01-71

To make an appointment, please contact Andrew El-Azzi, Committee Coordinator at 613-580-2424, ext. 21934, or at [Andrew.El-Azzi2@ottawa.ca](mailto:Andrew.El-Azzi2@ottawa.ca). When an objection has been received, City Council will consider the objection including all relevant information within 90 days after the end of the objection period. After consideration of the objection, Council may decide to withdraw the Notice of Intention to Designate or to pass a by-law designating the property under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Should Council pass a by-law to designate the property, there will be further correspondence from the City on how you may appeal this decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Should you require further information, please contact Sampoorna Bhattacharya, at (613) 580-2424, 21580 or by email at [sampoorna.bhattacharya@ottawa.ca](mailto:sampoorna.bhattacharya@ottawa.ca)

Regards,



Caitlin Salter MacDonald  
City Clerk

c.c.      Lauren Luchenski, Built Heritage Research Coordinator, City of Ottawa  
              ([lauren.luchenski@ottawa.ca](mailto:lauren.luchenski@ottawa.ca))  
              Sampoorna Bhattacharya, Heritage Planner, City of Ottawa,  
              ([sampoorna.bhattacharya@ottawa.ca](mailto:sampoorna.bhattacharya@ottawa.ca))  
              Registrar, Ontario Heritage Trust ([registrar@heritagetrust.on.ca](mailto:registrar@heritagetrust.on.ca))  
              Jiang Li, Embassy of the People's Republic of China  
              ([chineseembassyinottawa@gmail.com](mailto:chineseembassyinottawa@gmail.com))

Encl.

**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE 251 BESSERER STREET AS A PROPERTY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST, PURSUANT TO SECTION 29 (3) OF THE *ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18***

**DATED AND PUBLISHED** at the City of Ottawa this 11th day of June, 2025

**TAKE NOTICE** that the City of Ottawa, on May 28, 2025 established its intention to designate 251 Besserer Street under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY**

The former Rideau Exchange at 251 Besserer Street is a two-storey red brick building constructed in 1912. The property is located within the Sandy Hill neighbourhood of Ottawa, at the corner of Besserer Street and King Edward Avenue.

**STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST**

The property located at 251 Besserer Street has design value as a representative example of the Beaux-Arts architectural style, an expressive style evoking grandeur, stability and permanence, often featuring classical elements, and most commonly applied to turn of the century buildings. The former Rideau Exchange building is a symmetrical red brick building with stone details, composed of seven bays with a raised basement. Typical of the style, it features classical details including its large cornice, pilasters, decorative brickwork, and central entrance with portico.

The former Rideau Exchange has historical value for its direct associations with the Bell Telephone Company and the themes of development of telecommunications in Ottawa and women in the Canadian workforce. Purpose-built in 1912 as the second Bell Telephone Company switchboard exchange in Ottawa, the Rideau Exchange provided telephone services to the surrounding area until the 1940s. The property symbolizes a time of growth, technological advancement, and increased wealth in Ottawa. The former Rideau Exchange building sheds light on the history of women in the Canadian workforce. The Bell Telephone Company was established in 1877 and the first telephone exchange in Canada was built in 1878 in Hamilton, Ontario. By the year 1900, Bell exclusively hired women to work as switchboard operators, a position that demanded a high degree of patience, quick thinking and physical exertion. The building is also associated with longstanding Ottawa consumer goods store, J.G. Whyte & Sons. Founded in 1855, the store was first located on Rideau Street and was located at 251 Besserer Street from 1948 until 1980.

The former Rideau Exchange was likely designed by prominent Ottawa architect John Albert Ewart. Ewart was the architect for Ottawa's first telephone exchange, known as the Queen Exchange at 60 Queen Street (now demolished) and the third telephone exchange, the Carling Exchange at 200 First Avenue. The Carling Exchange is an architectural twin of this building. Ewart's most well-known works includes the Booth Building (165 Sparks Street), the Wellington Building (former Metropolitan Life Assurance Building), Knox Presbyterian Church at 120 Lisgar Street, and several schools.

The former Rideau Exchange is important in maintaining and defining the character of Sandy Hill. Developed in the 1860s, Sandy Hill is one of Ottawa's oldest neighbourhoods, with King Edward Avenue acting as the main road connecting the neighbourhood to Rideau Street and Lowertown. This part of Sandy Hill is characterized by red brick and stone buildings. 251 Besserer Street contributes to the neighbourhood through its massing and red brick construction.

The former Rideau Exchange has contextual value because it is historically and functionally linked to its surroundings. Located at the edge of Sandy Hill, the building at 251 Besserer Street is on the corner of Besserer Street and King Edward Avenue, the main road connecting the neighbourhood to Rideau Street and Lowertown. At the turnof-the-century, Sandy Hill was home to some of Ottawa's most affluent and influential individuals and was a rapidly growing residential neighbourhood. The installation of a telephone exchange indicates an increasing number of telephone subscribers in the neighbourhood, which corresponds with the area's growth at the time. King Edward Avenue was a hub for significant historic institutional and civic buildings such as the Andrew W. Fleck building, Champagne Bath, the Ottawa Electric Hydro Substation #4, the former Adath Jeshrun Synagogue, the former église évangélique baptiste d'Ottawa, and St. Alban's Anglican Church.

## **DESCRIPTION OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES**

Key exterior attributes that contribute to the heritage value of the former Rideau Exchange at 251 Besserer Street as a representative example of a Beaux-Arts commercial building include:

- Two-storey rectangular massing with raised basement
- Red brick cladding with recessed stringcourses below the first-storey
- Symmetrical front façade with seven bays and central entrance including:
  - double metal front doors
  - large square window divided into several lites
  - decorative metal and stone entablature surrounding entrance including volutes and pediment
- Two-storey brick pilasters with stone bases and capitals separating bays of windows
- Decorative brickwork between first and second storeys on the south and west façades
- Window openings with stone lintels and sills
- Stone string courses



- Stone roundels
- Flat roof with large overhanging cornice
- Stone foundation

The interior of the building and the north addition are excluded in this designation

## **OBJECTIONS**

Please be advised that any person wishing to object to this designation may do so under the objection process set out in Section 29 (5) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* by giving the Clerk of the City of Ottawa, within 30 days after the online publication of this notice, a notice of objection outlining the reasons for the objection and any other relevant information.

The notice of objection can be submitted via email to [CityClerk-HeritageObjections@ottawa.ca](mailto:CityClerk-HeritageObjections@ottawa.ca). The notice of objection can also be submitted via registered mail or be delivered in person, by appointment, at the following coordinates:

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For further information please contact: Sampoorina Bhattacharya,  
[sampoorina.bhattacharya@ottawa.ca](mailto:sampoorina.bhattacharya@ottawa.ca)