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IN THIS ISSUE:

- › PRECAST CONCRETE
- › STRUCTURAL STEEL
- › STEEL BUILDING SYSTEMS
- › GREEN ROOFS & WALLS
- › HARD SURFACE FLOORING
- › DOORS
- › ELECTRICAL & COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS
- › PAINT & COATINGS

Halton Regional Police Service Headquarters

by ZUZIA WODZYNSKA



The Halton Regional Police Service (HRPS) in Oakville, Ontario, will see a significant upgrade when their new headquarters are completed this year. Built in 1991, the existing facility shared its 86,000 square feet with other regional departments, with some of its services like forensics and training spread out over several locations. The new headquarters will see all of their needed services housed under one roof.

"The new headquarters has been designed to be a modern and efficient facility that will allow the Service to continue to grow in keeping with the needs of an expanding regional population," says Inspector Ivan L'Ortye, executive officer of Chief's staff at HRPS.

In the past, physical, classroom, pistol, and long-gun training and qualification were held at three different locations, adding time and expense for travel. The new training facilities in the building will include a 50-metre, 10-lane shooting range that can accommodate vehicles for a more realistic scenario-based training experience for officers as well as a dedicated training room and classroom.

"Such amenities expand our ability to centralize our approach to training and align with best training practices so our front line officers are prepared for all scenarios," comments L'Ortye. "The result will be significant time and cost savings to the organization as well as enhanced community safety, as officers will be trained locally and will be able to respond quickly should they be required in the field for incident response."

The new facility also features special bays for the examination of vehicles involved in fatal collisions, offices for senior command and administrative functions, and the Service's 911 communication centre. A state-of-art Forensic Identification Services (FIS) area will have fully equipped bio-laboratories to safely manage crime scene

evidence of varying types and provide a consolidated repository for property and evidence storage.

"Police facilities today struggle with achieving an appropriate balance between officer safety and being inviting to the general public," notes John Pepper, principal in charge at Rebanks Pepper Littlewood Architects Inc. "The new headquarters are an example of fostering this relationship with our community in a positive way."

The multi-storey central atrium brings daylight into the centre of the building and acts as an important communication space for staff working in the building. "The central staircase is structural steel with glass balustrades and seems to hang off each floor," observes John Della Serra of Eastern Construction Company. "It creates an interesting and welcoming feature when you first walk in."

Many of the common spaces such as the staff break room and common meeting and training room are located off the atrium. "A bright central space – as a main circulation node and a space where staff could cross paths, socialize and exchange information – was a large part of the design concept," adds Pepper. "The lobby was designed with a public forecourt with benches and bike racks to create an inviting refuge."

The main four-storey, bar-shaped building that houses many of the office functions dominates the skyline and is surrounded by lower elements containing technical spaces that needed grade-level access. "Many of the larger spaces require grade-level access for vehicles and higher ceilings. To address important functional adjacencies, the central elongated tower is centered between the high-bay spaces," notes Pepper. "The overall design grew out of a complex set of functional relationships between office, support, and technical areas."



The long dimension is oriented in an east-west direction to optimize energy performance. "By locating much of the exterior glazing facing due north or south, unwanted solar heat gain and glare from low morning and evening sun is avoided. In winter, the low sun is permitted in to reduce lighting energy use," says Pepper. Areas where lighting levels are critical such as the 911 communications centre are located on the north side of the building. Mechanical and electrical systems were designed by MCW Consultants Ltd.

As a post-disaster facility, electrical systems here are more complex. "In the event of emergency, the Police Services headquarters still has to function," notes Della Serra. "Everything is doubled: there are two emergency generators, there's UPS backup and building automation systems are backed up."

Moving staff and operations from the existing facility to the new one will be conducted in several phases spanning up to six weeks. "A communications plan for this transition has been developed that addresses both our internal and external stakeholders," says L'Ortye.

Other challenges arose from finding the optimal balance between the project scope and the approved budget. "For cost effectiveness, decisions on building materials, systems, quality, durability, reliability and other factors were made collaboratively between the design team, facility users and the Region of Halton as owner," notes Pepper.

A simple pallet of materials was used, including masonry, metal panels, metal siding in a variety of profiles and colours, limestone, glass and simple aluminum sandwich panels for service

LOCATION

2485 North Service Rd, West Oakville, Ontario

OWNER

Halton Regional Police Service

ARCHITECT

Rebanks Pepper Littlewood Architects Inc.

ASSOCIATE ARCHITECT

Parkin Architects Limited

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Eastern Construction Company Limited

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

WSP Canada Inc.

MECHANICAL/ ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

MCW Consultants Ltd.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

GSP Group

TOTAL SIZE

235,000 square feet

TOTAL COST

\$67.9 million

areas. Crisp composite metal panels and an imposing limestone crest wall present a high-quality image to the public side. Less expensive metal siding on the north and south faces create a landmark effect with grey siding in two colours, accented with orange, representing the golden elements of the Halton Regional Police Services' shoulder patch.

Weather was a factor during the initial phases of the project. "Our first winter was quite difficult, impacting excavations and foundations, pouring the concrete structure and backfilling in sub-zero temperatures," comments Della Serra. "We were able to make up time with some proposed design changes and are proud of the solutions and alternatives we've been able to provide."

One of these design changes meant working closely with WSP, the structural consultants on the project. In an elongated building like this one, shrinking and warping of the structural concrete becomes a concern. To counteract this effect, a section on each floor would be left out for three months. "The shoring and forms would be left in for this time, which required interior finishes to be re-sequenced," notes Della Serra. Creative problem-solving allowed the teams to continue without further delays.

"This project represents an important step forward for the Halton Regional Police Service, replacing outdated and outgrown facilities and providing them with new, efficient and well-planned workspaces and community engagement areas," says Pepper. "The new building reflects the pride the organization takes in its service to the community, yet reflects the prudent approach to capital investment to support those services." **A**