

**Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)**

**250 College Street**

*John B. Parkin Associates, 1964*



Halim Hyun

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is Canada's largest mental health and addiction psychiatric hospital and a major research center in Toronto, Ontario. CAMH is a high-rise institution building of the University of Toronto that consists of 14-story offices with a central core and, above it, mechanical equipment. The most imposing volume is the precast-concrete-clad tower which is located at 250 College Street, attached to a low block to the north. It was completed in 1964 by the firm of John B. Parkin Associates, the largest firm in the country. The architect, John B. Parkin, with John C. Parkin the partner in charge of design, were the leading figures who contributed to the development of Modernism in Canada. John B. Parkin had the root in the classical tradition of the North American schools which led to Modernism. Among mid-twentieth-century corporate architectural practices in Toronto, Parkin's work considers the planning concepts of the Modern movement that brought substantial change to the face of the Canadian built environment. The perfection of design and execution were pursued from the Toronto-based Parkin practice as it grew from the late 1940s to the 1970s. It reshaped not only the urban fabric under Modernism but also contributed to social and political changes based on a building's relation to the urban context, use of new materials, and its expressiveness.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health of the University of Toronto was one of the firm's work in the mid-twentieth-century which relevantly expressed the characteristics of Modern architecture and the era when it was designed and built. The most imposing building at 250 College Street could be pictured as a clean, extruded concrete block. The precast-concrete was used as a finished material of CAMH building façade, it reflects a modern aesthetic. In the three-story base, it was designed in concrete panels and alternating elongated windows with different width between panels. Moreover, the concrete panels appear as functional columns, and the vertical expanses of windows take advantage of visual aspects, bringing the site view into the. The main facades of the main body are wrapped with precast concrete units and the concrete screens are added at the top for hiding mechanical equipment, while it gives the visual appeal to the building. These features of CAMH represent a Modernist posture that a diverse program is functionally placed in their rectangular forms that commit on a tight site. Both urban fabric and object contributed to making this hybrid building, a compromise between traditional and modern.

In terms of statement of significance, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is preserved both as one of the city's Modern buildings and as a document of this formative period in

Toronto's modernist era. Also, it distinguishes Modernism within the historical period in the mid-twentieth century, when European Modern architecture adapted to Canadian context. As seen in CAMH building, the new design and construction of Modern movement ideas are exposed with key elements of the building which flowed through the local urban fabric using modern materials and systems. Modernists also consider the contradictory objective, where the CAMH consists of concrete panels in the three-story base. Therefore, CAMH building is as an example of Modernity that John B. Parkin embraced modernist ideals to practice in Canada which asserts architecture could improve the quality of life. According to Parkin's attitude, architecture is not only merging, but also positioned as integral role in relationship between society and culture to the government and industry.



Sketch of the façade of concrete units

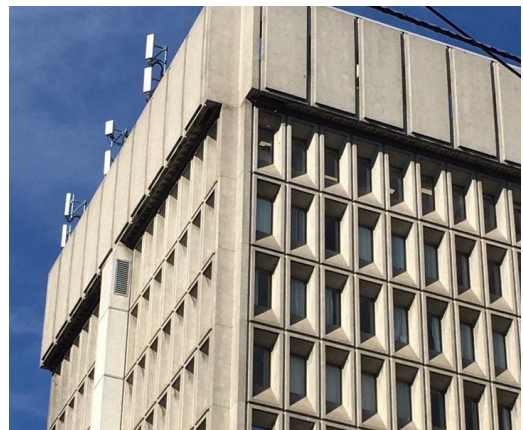
Precast-Concrete



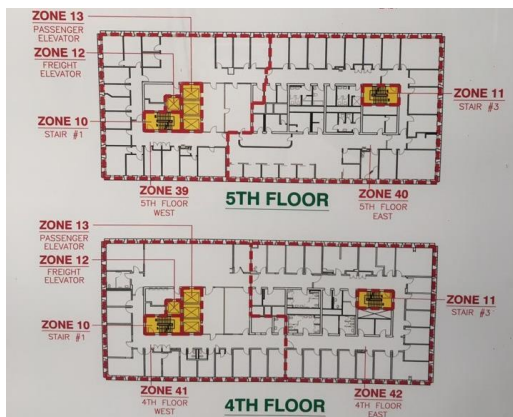




The view of exterior façade, the concrete panels look like structural columns.



Precast-concrete units are wrapping main volume of building and the concrete screen covers top of the building



The plans of fourth and fifth floor of building, show the variety program fits in rectangular form

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