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Bank at current location since 1916

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Burns has been managing the downtown branch since October of 2001. She was transferred here from the same bank in Kingston but still commutes every day.

"I absolutely love it here," Burns said. "Belleville is wonderful and the staff here is absolutely great. They have made me feel very welcome.

"It's my pleasure to drive here every day and manage this branch," said Burns.

The branch employs 18 people, including several account managers and small business personnel at its satellite office across the street at 232 Front St.

Diane Sheridan has the distinction of being the longest serving employee at the downtown CIBC branch. She has spent the past 27 years at the reception area right inside the main entrance.

"I'm the first person they see and, hopefully, they get a cheery hello," she chuckled. "I make a point of greeting customers with a smile."

Sheridan said she's enjoyed her tenure at the branch.

"It certainly has a lot of memories for me," she said. "I have met a lot of friends through my job."

Belleville resident Bill Henderson has been doing all his banking at the branch for the past 30 years.

"This branch is perfect for me," he said. "It's very close to home and they do everything for my banking needs. And they are all pleasant...they don't make mistakes."

Henderson wished the branch another 125 years in business "even though I won't be around to see that."

The CIBC has a storied history in Belleville and the rest of Canada.

The Canadian Bank of Commerce was founded in 1867 and opened its Belleville branch in 1878.

The Standard Bank of Canada was founded in 1873 and was later absorbed by the Canadian Bank of Commerce. The Standard Bank opened a branch in Belleville on the east side of Front Street Sept. 25, 1906, and became a Commerce branch after the amalgamation of The Commerce and The Standard in 1928.

The Imperial Bank of Canada was founded in 1875.

The CIBC was created through

the mergers of the Canadian Bank of Commerce and the Imperial Bank of Canada in June of 1961.

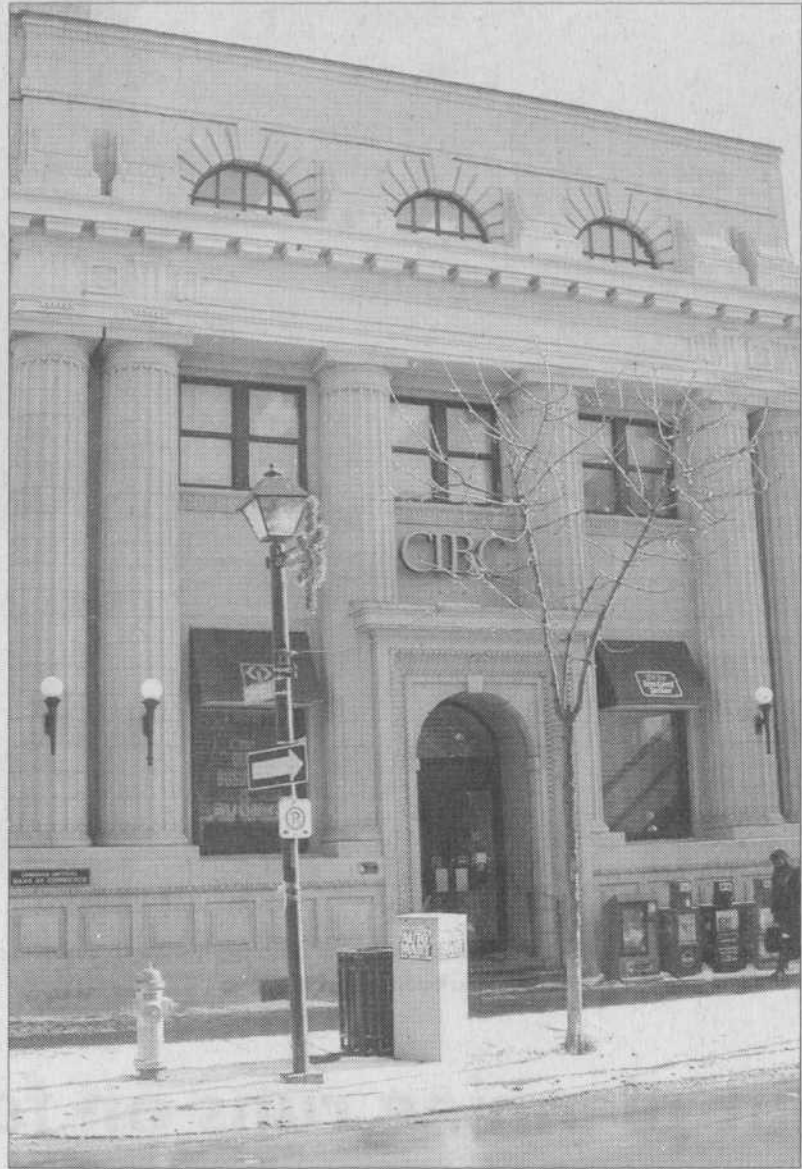
The current CIBC branch opened in 1916 at 237 Front St. Built in the classical Victorian Italianate style, the present day structure remains very similar to the original one. The only exception is that the awnings have been removed from the windows.

The bank completed additions in 1930 and 1944 onto the existing structure. The branch completed extensive renovations to the bank's interior in 1979.

Belleville city council passed a bylaw in 1980 by the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee of Ontario designating the branch "as a building of historic and architectural value and interest."

Donna Czechowski, Heritage Belleville treasurer, said Friday's anniversary marked a milestone in the history in the city.

"This is Belleville's only original bank structure as well as the oldest...and the downtown is proud to have this bank as one of its major draws."



INTELLIGENCER PHOTO BY HENRY BURY

The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce has been at its Front Street location since 1916.