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George Green
Vice-President, Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage
Parks Canada Agency
30 Victoria Street
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Re: Commemorative Integrity of the Rideau Canal

Dear George,

I am writing to you concerning heritage issues affecting the Rideau Canal National Historic Site. As I presume you are aware, there are serious deficiencies in the Commemorative Integrity of the site to the point where the Rideau Canal is not currently in a state of Commemorative Integrity. Those deficiencies are most prevalent with the Commemorative Integrity components of public education and heritage landscapes. I'd like to find out the specifics of what Parks Canada is doing to address these serious issues.

The heritage issues on the Rideau Canal are many; I've structured them into a report card which I've included with this letter and email. The background to each of those issues is explained in detail on my Save Our Rideau website www.SaveOurRideau.ca. In a nutshell, Parks Canada is not operating the Rideau Canal as a National Historic Site of Canada, much less a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I encourage you to take the time to read the background material for the report card, each of those heritage issues has an impact on the Commemorative Integrity of the site.

The budget cuts and management structure changes done in 2012 not only removed the modest amount of heritage presentation done at that time, it also removed the capacity for Parks Canada to deliver heritage programming on the Rideau Canal. That lack of capacity remains today. There is presently no qualified heritage staff and there is no one in the management structure of the Rideau Canal with the skill sets to properly manage your heritage requirements. A senior manager in the Rideau Canal office, with a proper heritage background, administering qualified heritage staff, is required, at a minimum, if Parks Canada is to follow their own legislation, mandate, cultural resource management policies, and ensure the Commemorative Integrity of the site.

In 2012, live interpretation sites such as Sweeney House (defensible lockmaster's house) and the Blacksmith's Shop at the Jones Falls Lockstation were closed and they remain closed today. Jones Falls is a very good case example of the many problems regarding heritage on the Rideau Canal, including heritage landscape issues such as vegetation obscured cultural viewsapes, inappropriate modern repairs which have eroded the heritage landscape, and lack of quality public education. Many components of the site which relate to the designation of the Rideau Canal as a National History site remain either poorly interpreted or uninterpreted. I'd be happy to take you on a tour of the site so that you can see those issues first hand. The many heritage issues at Jones Falls are mirrored to one degree or another at all the other lockstations along the length of the Rideau Canal.

John Festarini, Associate Director of Ontario Waterways, is aware of the issues I'm raising since he is the only one in the present day management structure of the Rideau Canal that has taken the time to talk to me. This disinterest in the heritage aspects of the Rideau Canal on the part of the present-day management of the canal also speaks to serious public engagement issues, Parks Canada's true interest in the heritage of the Rideau Canal NHS, and your legislated Commemorative Integrity requirements. You may speak to John regarding the issues I've raised, he's becoming more familiar with them, but he has not been provided with the resources to properly deal with the many heritage issues that are facing the Rideau Canal today. And of course, since he's only part-time managing the Rideau Canal (due to his dual responsibilities to both the Rideau Canal and to the Trent-Severn Waterway which has major issues of its own), he has not had the time to properly learn and review the many heritage issues facing the Rideau Canal.

While my background is geology, I have, for the last 20-years, been running a very large non-commercial website about the Rideau Canal (www.rideau-info.com). I've also written several books about the history of the canal and have been involved for many years with several Rideau heritage organizations. I'm very familiar with both the history of the canal and of Parks Canada's administration of the canal, so I do speak with some authority on this topic. I've also recently discussed these issues with Manuel Stevens, retired planner for the former Ontario Service Centre, someone deeply familiar with Parks Canada's Commemorative Integrity and Cultural Resource Management requirements, and he shares my concerns over the state of the Commemorative Integrity of the Rideau Canal National Historic Site.

I would appreciate the courtesy of a considered, timely and honest reply regarding what Parks Canada will do to address the many heritage issues that I've outlined in my report card and to return the Rideau Canal National Historic Site to a state of Commemorative Integrity.

Yours truly,



Ken W. Watson

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cc. Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change.
Daniel Watson, Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency
Thao Pham, Senior Vice-President, Operations, Parks Canada Agency
Darlene Upton, Executive Director, Ontario and Waterways, Parks Canada Agency
Jewel Cunningham, Director, Ontario Waterways, Parks Canada Agency
John Festarini, Associate Director, Parks Canada Agency
Manuel Stevens
Rideau Advisory Committee
Friends of the Rideau
Rideau Roundtable