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The Honourable Catherine McKenna  
Minister of the Environment and Climate Change  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

June 22, 2017

*Re: Rideau Canal & Liberal promise to reverse cuts*

Dear Minister McKenna,

I am writing to find out how you are planning to address a Liberal election promise to reverse the cuts done to Parks Canada by the previous government and specifically to the cuts made to the Rideau Canal National Historic Site. This is a promise yet to be kept – to date no visible action on this issue has been done by your government.

There were many cuts done to the Rideau Canal, the most devastating of which was the removal of the heritage interpretation field unit and heritage expertise in support of that unit. When Parks Canada re-organized the management of the Rideau Canal into a new waterways unit in 2012, heritage staffing was notable by their complete absence in the new organization structure. That problem continues to this day, there is no heritage interpretation unit, there is no heritage manager, and Parks Canada's focus on the Rideau continues to be the Harper Government's policy of revenue generation, presently being done at the expense of heritage presentation. It is to be noted that both the Parks Canada Agency Act and Parks Canada's own Commemorative Integrity policies place cultural heritage presentation and public education as key requirements for Parks Canada – requirements that are not being met.

In example, Parks Canada recently launched a new website for the Rideau Canal. What little history and educational components there were on the old website are now completely absent on the new website. It would have been a wonderful opportunity to beef up the small amount of public education that Parks Canada is presently doing on the Rideau Canal. The reason for the absence of heritage on their website is the cultural shift done to Parks Canada by the Harper government, a culture that doesn't care about heritage presentation – a culture that needs to be changed by your government. The Rideau Canal is not being operated by Parks Canada as a National Historic Site of Canada nor as a UNESCO World Heritage Site – both of those designations demand robust heritage presentation and public education which is absent on the Rideau Canal today.

There are also some serious issues surrounding public engagement, which is currently very limited, and public transparency – but my main concern remains the heritage presentation requirements of the Rideau Canal National Historic Site. Parks Canada's legislation and

Cultural Resource Management policies don't need to be changed, they used to provide clear direction to Parks Canada, and can again if Parks Canada actually follows them. So the fix is not that difficult – but it will require an outside force, your Department, to get them to change.

The extra infrastructure money for the Rideau Canal being provided by your government is very welcome, but it is to be noted that it does nothing to address the Harper government cuts. In fact the cuts have negatively impacted that work since Parks Canada does not have sufficient heritage staff with the required skill sets to properly ensure that Cultural Resource Management policies are followed – there have been several problems already with this during the current Rideau Canal infrastructure work.

I know that your protocol is to send this letter down to the agency in question (Parks Canada) but I would appreciate an honest answer from your department rather than a self-serving non-answer from Parks Canada. The problem is Parks Canada itself, it will take your Department to effect changes – to restore Parks Canada back to what its legislation, Cultural Resource Management policies and UNESCO World Heritage commitments require to properly manage and present the heritage of the Rideau Canal.

I know that you've been pre-occupied since your appointment as Minister with the very important Climate Change portfolio, but, if you haven't already done so, some of your staff should be specifically devoted to this topic. Parks Canada needs to be fixed, the Rideau Canal needs to be operated as a National Historic Site of Canada and as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

I am cc.ing this to Mary Jean McFall since I had a good sit-down discussion with her during the election about the effects of the cuts and the need to fix the damage done to the Parks Canada and the Rideau Canal by the previous government.

I have also attached a report card regarding Parks Canada's heritage management of the Rideau Canal which provides a brief synopsis of the many problems. The "read more" details can be found on the Save Our Rideau website: [www.SaveOurRideau.ca](http://www.SaveOurRideau.ca) – I would encourage staff that you have looking after the Parks Canada portfolio to read that information in detail in order to fully understand the issues I'm bringing forward. I'd be happy to talk to them to clarify any of the issues I've raised.

Yours truly,

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cc. Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
Mary Jean McFall, Chief of Staff, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
Hunter McGill, Chair, Friends of the Rideau  
Save Our Rideau