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Hon. Peter Kent  
401 Confederation Building  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Kent,

I am writing to express my deep concerns about the heritage management of the Rideau Canal under Parks Canada. This is an existing problem that is now being exacerbated by how Parks Canada is applying the recent federally mandated budget cuts. I'll be brief in this letter as I have created a website, [www.SaveOurRideau.ca](http://www.SaveOurRideau.ca), which can be used as a backgrounder for the issues I am raising.

The Rideau Canal played a significant role in forging our identity as Canadians – it is a heritage story that should be told by Parks Canada in both the physical appearance and the heritage interpretation of the site. This is part of Parks Canada's mandate as the steward of this magnificent part of our Canadian heritage. However, while the Rideau Canal is both a National Historic Site of Canada and a World Heritage Site, Parks Canada has no one in the direct management of the Rideau Canal in charge of heritage. This glaring oversight in their management structure is a reflection of how far they have been moving away, over the past decade, from their ability and willingness to deliver their heritage mandate.

As one example of how Parks Canada has been shifting their organization culture away from heritage, they are now using staff and resources to deliver National Parks programs on cultural heritage sites such as the Rideau Canal. These programs are being done at the expense of heritage. For instance, they introduced their "Visitor Experience" program on the Rideau Canal in 2010. This program, which consumes both Rideau Canal staff and budget, does not focus on heritage. The visitor experience on the Rideau should be a heritage experience; however staff and budget resources are being used to deliver programs such as Parks Canada's "Learn to Camp," while significant heritage locations on the canal, such as the lockstation at Jones Falls, are suffering from lack of attention to heritage. I've posted a photo essay about Jones Falls on my [www.SaveOurRideau.ca](http://www.SaveOurRideau.ca) website which visually illustrates this problem. While one can debate the merits of the Learn to Camp program, it is clear that Parks Canada should not be using resources allocated to a cultural heritage site such as the Rideau Canal for this type of program.

Parks Canada is well aware of my concerns. In December 2010 I presented the Superintendent of the Rideau Canal, Don Marrin, with an 11 page heritage issues list. The 16 points of that list are shown on the Save Our Rideau website. To date I have not received any official response to my concerns, and there have been no improvements, in fact quite the contrary. It is to be noted that many of the

concerns are items that can be addressed within the existing Parks Canada budget. In fact several, such as creating meaningful working relationships with the Rideau heritage volunteer community, would save the government money. Unfortunately, Parks Canada these days is actively discouraging public engagement and community involvement.

Ultimately the responsibility for maintaining Canadian heritage, such as the Rideau Canal, rests with the Government of Canada. It is both a moral responsibility, helping to maintain our Canadian identity and sense of place, and in several instances, such as the World Heritage Convention, a legal responsibility. What is happening on the Rideau Canal is reflecting badly on the Government of Canada. The Rideau Canal is a Canadian treasure and should be treated as such.

My own interest in the heritage of the Rideau Canal is as an informed citizen. I'm a resident on the canal and since 1996 I've been operating a large non-commercial website all about the Rideau Canal, freely providing as much information as I can about the Rideau Canal to the general public. In addition, I've written several books about the canal, give tours and talks, and work with several Rideau heritage organizations, all on a volunteer basis. I care deeply about the Rideau Canal and would like to see this reflected in the management of the canal by Parks Canada.

In closing, I'd like to invite yourself and any members of your staff who are dealing with the Parks Canada portfolio (particularly Park Canada's responsibility to the National Historic sites that they administer) to take a guided tour with me of the Jones Falls Lockstation. While you can read or be briefed about the issues, there is no substitute for actually seeing the effects on the ground of Parks Canada's shift away from heritage. Jones Falls is one of the best examples of all the things that have gone wrong with Parks Canada's ability to protect and promote the heritage of the Rideau Canal.

I look forward to hearing your positive response to my concerns.

Yours truly,

Ken Watson

cc. Right Hon. Stephen Harper  
Gord Brown, MP  
Save Our Rideau