



Ontario Waterway's Directors Office
34 Beckwith Street, S
Smith Falls, Ontario
K7A 2A8

21/06/2018

Dear Mr. Watson,

Your letter of May 27, 2018 to the Honorable Minister Catherine McKenna regarding heritage presentation on the Rideau Canal was shared with me for response by Parks Canada.

Over 13,000 Canadians shared their views on Canada's national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas through Let's Talk Parks, Canada! as part of the Minister's Round Table. Thank you for your acknowledgement of the final report. The insights and perspectives shared by Canadians through Let's Talk Parks, Canada! are invaluable. The identified priorities to sustain the ecological and economic value that our heritage places provide for communities and species as well as enabling people to further discover and connect with our places and heritage are particularly relevant for the Rideau Canal.

As you note in your letter, the management structure of the Rideau Canal has experienced many changes in recent years, including merging with the Trent Severn Waterway as part of the Ontario Waterways. These changes have provided an increased focus by Parks Canada senior management on waterways issues resulting in a much higher profile for the Rideau Canal and its needs, in turn facilitating a significant investment in maintaining the Rideau Canal's heritage structures.

Parks Canada has announced over one hundred million dollars of projects over the next few years. These projects will repair and enhance the locks, dams, bridges and landscapes that make the Rideau Canal a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The magnitude of this investment requires us to manage projects with fiscal prudence while adhering to sound cultural resource management practices. Parks Canada has dedicated cultural resource management professionals who provide full-time support and advice related to heritage protection as directed through the Parks Canada Cultural Resource Management Policy. For example, many of the locks will undergo heritage masonry repair work to ensure the continued structural integrity and functionality of the lock while maintaining their unique heritage elements.

We also address commemorative integrity and tell the stories of the Rideau Canal through Visitor Services. As a few examples:

- The Jones Falls Lock Station has an on-site Blacksmith and 2 Costumed students on staff who deliver interpretive programming and more extensive group tours are available;
- Our Mobile Paddle and Interpretation Team offers free on-water paddle clinics throughout the canal, and supports local events with information about paddling, Species at Risk, and Rideau Canal history;
- The Voyageur Canoe Experience at Hartwells offers a glimpse of the traditional engineering and operations that give the Rideau Canal its heritage character from the water;
- Heritage buildings such as the Bytown Museum, Merrickville Blockhouse, Kingston Mills Block House, Anglin House and Woods Mills Visitor Centre offer interpretative displays and tours. These offers are often delivered in partnership with other organizations that support the mandate of the Rideau Canal.
- Alternative accommodation offers, such as oTENTiks and former lock master residences, offer non-boaters an opportunity to experience and learn about the canal.

By working in partnerships with others, Parks Canada is working to create and deliver unique offers that foster recreation and tourism.

We are continuing to develop the draft Management Plan for the Rideau Canal, taking into account the stakeholder feedback that was provided to us during the development of the Scoping Document in 2017 (as a pre-cursor to developing the Management Plan). There will be a period of public consultations to solicit input on Management Plan as the document that will provide Parks Canada with the strategic direction of the Canal for the next ten years. This outreach will include an opportunity to comment on the focus on a sustainable canal and the impacts and challenges to heritage protection and presentation. I look forward to hearing your comments once that process begins.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Rideau Canal and I appreciate having the opportunity to respond to your concerns.

Sincerely,



Jewel Cunningham
Director, Ontario Waterways Field Unit
Parks Canada Agency

cc. Hunter McGill, Chair, Friends of the Rideau
Save Our Rideau