



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

Annual Public Meeting

9 SEPTEMBER 2020

SUMMARY REPORT

Canada

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner of the page features four stylized maple leaves. The leaves are light beige or tan in color and are arranged in a diagonal line, pointing upwards and to the right. They are semi-transparent, allowing the white background to show through.

I – Description

Context

As part of government-wide efforts to increase accountability and transparency over the past 17 years, the National Capital Commission (NCC) has organized an annual public meeting (APM) with the NCC CEO and Chair.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the format of the meeting was adapted to follow public health directives. The 2020 annual public meeting was held exclusively online to ensure the safety of participants and the public. In the context of sharing information related to NCC's strategic directions, the meeting included an introduction by the moderator and brief presentations by the Chair and CEO on the year in review, as well as priority projects for the remainder of the year. This was followed by a question period, where the Chair and CEO responded to questions that had been provided ahead of the event by interested members of the public.

Objectives

The objectives of the APM were as follows:

- Provide the public with an overview of the NCC's accomplishments in the past year.
- Provide the public with an outline of the NCC's current activities and priorities for the year to come.
- Provide the public with an overview of adapted measures and uses of NCC assets during the pandemic.
- Offer the public an opportunity to ask questions or provide comments on the corporate priorities.
- Enhance the public's awareness and understanding of the NCC's mandate.

II – Process

Overview

Date and location: Wednesday, September 9, 2020, live-streamed from the NCC YouTube channel.

Time: 6 pm

Meeting proceedings

- Introduction by Luc Fournier, Director, Public Affairs

- Presentation by the Chair: Strategic directions and governance
- Presentation by the CEO: Year in review, priority projects
- Public question and comment period

Invitations and promotion

- An invitation was sent by email to the following:
 - the Public Affairs distribution list (members of the public and interest groups)
 - elected officials
- Facebook and Twitter messages promoted the annual public meeting.

Participants

Speakers

- Marc Seaman, Chair, NCC
- Tobi Nussbaum, CEO, NCC

Guests

- Members of the public, 250 total views on YouTube

NCC Board members attending

- Mireille Apollon
- Larry Beasley
- Lise Bernier
- Victor Brunette
- Michael Foderick
- Tanya Gracie
- Caroline Lajoie
- Lisa M. MacDonald
- Deborah Lynn Morrison
- Norm Odjick
- Sara Jane O'Neill
- Lou Ragagnin
- Denis B. Vaillancourt
- Mayor Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin, Gatineau
- Mayor Jim Watson, Ottawa

NCC staff attending

- Luc Fournier, Director, Public Affairs (emcee)

III – Question and Comment Period

The following is an overview of questions received from members of the public, and the answers provided.

Question 1

My concerns are with the use of ATVs and now also side-by-side vehicles that illegally use the Chemin du Lac-la-Pêche within Gatineau Park from Lac-des-Loups and/or St. Louis Street. This has been going on for years and even with the washed-out section of this road, these illegal vehicles just cross the stream (La Pêche River) without any concerns for the environment. These concerns also apply to the Curley Lake Road.

Answer 1

- The Chemin du Lac-la-Pêche is under municipal jurisdiction, and the NCC does not have control over the use of that road by ATVs and side-by-side vehicles.
- However, we are working with the Municipality of Pontiac to minimize the impact of the stream crossing at the washed-out culvert site.
- Regarding Curley Lake Road, in the coming year, the NCC foresees closing unofficial trails, restoring natural habitats, and closing the existing snowmobile trail in the Curley Lake sector.

Question 2

What is your plan to address the lack of paved shoulders on Anderson Road?

Answer 2

- Anderson Road is owned by the City of Ottawa, and does not fall under the jurisdiction of the NCC. We will forward your question to the local councillor and appropriate City of Ottawa staff.

Question 3

What is the NCC doing to repair and maintain the trails in Orléans Forest Valley Park, in the NCC portion, south of the City of Ottawa lands?

Answer 3

- These trails are not currently part of the Greenbelt Trail network.
- As part of the 2013 Greenbelt Master Plan, we have identified plans to build a trail network in the Chapel Hill North Core Natural Area.

- Preliminary assessments for this trail network have been completed by NCC staff. However, the plan is currently on hold due to competing NCC priorities and pending funding approvals. Once there is approval, we will share the timeline with the community and local elected officials.

Question 4

When can the public expect the Gatineau parkways to be open to vehicular traffic on a regular basis?

Answer 4

- Motor vehicles will have access to Gatineau Park parkways daily from noon until sunset, during the Fall Rhapsody period starting September 26.
- As usual, the parkways will close to all motor vehicle traffic on October 25 this year, in advance of the winter season.
- Following the fall season, the NCC will evaluate the summer 2020 pilot project, with the intention of determining future motorized use of the parkways.

Question 5

How do you intend to address increasingly visible acid mine drainage from the abandoned Moss Mine in Gatineau Park and communicate public safety risks to the affected area?

Answer 5

- After thoroughly investigating the issue, the NCC is satisfied that there are no acid mine drainage issues at the former Moss Mine in Gatineau Park.
- Two studies were recently conducted by the NCC: the first in December, which maintains that there is currently no scientific evidence directly linking any potential contamination from the Moss Mine to any off-site properties, and the second, from March 2019, concluding that there is no direct surface water connection from the NCC site to any off-site properties.
- As part of both its Environmental Strategy and its contaminated sites management program, the NCC is committed to assess, secure and, when needed, remediate its contaminated sites considering risk management principles and sound financial investments. The NCC will continue to respect the legislated requirements for ongoing monitoring in this area.

Question 6

What are you doing to connect the end of the Prescott-Russell pathway through the Greenbelt?

Answer 6

- Linking the Prescott-Russell Recreational Trail to the Greenbelt is a component of the Capital Pathway Strategic Plan, which will be presented to the Board of Directors for approval in October.
- Thereafter, a plan of action will have to be developed, actions prioritized and project funding confirmed.

Question 7

How are you addressing the dangerous crossing of the Prescott-Russell pathway and Renaud Road, where someone was killed last year?

Answer 7

- Both the Renaud Road and the Prescott-Russell Recreational Trail at this location are not NCC properties. We will forward your question to the local councillor and appropriate City of Ottawa staff.

Question 8

What is the NCC doing to fulfill the “option 7” road plan supported by the City of Ottawa?

Answer 8

- The NCC strives to achieve an environmentally sustainable and resilient National Capital Region — which includes the Greenbelt and its Mer Bleue wetlands.
- Option no. 7 would see the construction of a 77-metre-wide arterial road through protected natural habitat and farmland in the Greenbelt, adjacent to world-recognized sensitive wetlands. The fragmentation and loss of these lands is irreversible.
- The NCC maintains an ongoing willingness to discuss mutually acceptable solutions more closely aligned with the 2013 letter of understanding with City of Ottawa.

Question 9

Why are swimmers disallowed full use of the lakes within Gatineau Park? Why are we unable to swim at our risk beyond the marked sections?

Answer 9

- In accordance with section 31 of the NCC *Traffic and Property Regulations*, swimming is prohibited from all NCC properties except those designated for that purpose and according to the conditions prescribed by the NCC.
- This prohibition on swimming is in place to manage the suite of recreational activities so that they are undertaken safely.
- The NCC is sensitive to the interests of open water swimmers, and will consult stakeholders to establish a program that balances the needs of both users and property owners, while bearing in mind the need to protect the health of the Park.

Question 10

When can we expect an action plan for a new interprovincial crossing in the east end? Please provide a progress update for the new interprovincial bridge in the east end, per last year's federal budget.

Answer 10

- In 2019, the federal budget directed the NCC to refresh the 2013 Interprovincial Bridge Crossing Environmental Assessment with updated data and information. This update was completed in June 2020, and is available on the NCC website.
- Budget 2019 also directed the NCC to develop a long-term integrated interprovincial crossing plan, which is currently under way and expected to be completed in June 2021.
- This plan will provide a long-term strategic framework for interprovincial crossings and sustainable mobility in the National Capital Region toward the horizon year of 2050.
- This fall will see consultations for crossings, including the Long-Term Integrated Crossing Sustainable Transportation Study, as well as the Alexandra Bridge replacement project.

Question 11

Saturday and Sunday closures of the parkways were a huge success. What are your plans to make these weekend closures permanent?

Answer 11

- The Saturday and Sunday closures of the parkways were developed as a response to the pandemic.

- These programs are still in effect until the end of September. We are still gathering information and data about them. When these programs are completed, we will provide our recommendations.
- It is too early at this point to determine how this initiative will move forward.

Question 12

In lieu of global movements to decolonize public spaces, do you plan to change the name of the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway to something that is not overtly colonial? The NCC acknowledges that it occupies unceded Algonquin/Anishinabe territory, do you plan to engage with these people to rectify these colonial stories that take place on their land?

Answer 12

- The NCC has a long-standing relationship with the Algonquin Nation which has allowed for numerous animated exchanges. These have led to examples of placemaking in the Capital Region in places such as Pindigen Park, the Kabeshinân Minitig Pavilion and Mâwandòseg Bridge.
- We recognize that there is more to do. We have initiated a conversation about using Algonquin words to name trails in Gatineau Park and the riverfront park along the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway.
- It is also about more than names on buildings. It is about working with the Algonquin Nation on integrating an Indigenous Guardians program in Gatineau Park; it is about meaningful participation in Capital-building projects like LeBreton Flats. The NCC is part of a working group with the Algonquin Nation on this important project and others.

Question 13

Please elaborate on your plans to review the fee structures in Gatineau Park. Access fees for vehicles are fair, but access for users creates issues of accessibility to users, regardless of income levels.

Answer 13

We would like to adopt a pricing framework that does the following:

- Reaches all visitors and applies fairly, considering the situation of low-income people.
- Includes the method of transportation used to access the Park, and the activity enjoyed.

- Makes it possible to promote ways of accessing the Park that help reduce traffic congestion and the overcrowding of parking lots.
- Fosters a positive effect on the Park environment.

Once the Gatineau Park Master Plan is approved, we will continue to engage with Park users, and work to develop this new fee structure. An access fee structure for the Park is a way for users to collectively contribute to maintaining the quality and quantity of recreational offerings and services.

Question 14

When will the road along the shore of Meech Lake be rehabilitated? It is unpleasant for bike riding.

Answer 14

- Chemin du Lac-Meech belongs to the Municipality of Chelsea. Rehabilitation work is planned to be undertaken over the next few years.

Question 15

Why does the NCC keep sabotaging the local sport climbing community, specifically by destroying the works set up to prevent erosion at the cliff at Luskville, without informing the community, without any visible plan for or intention of replacement and which accelerates erosion?

Answer 15

- The NCC has been working with the climbing community since 2008 — specifically the Alpine Club of Canada – Ottawa Section and Outaouais Section.
- The NCC provides and maintains safe sites that protect both the environment and species at risk.
- There are three official climbing sites that offer five rock faces and over 60 climbing routes, which have been restored since 2010.

Question 16

16 a. I do not understand why there is a fee for snowshoeing and biking during the winter season when the trails are maintained by snowshoers? Why is hiking permitted at no cost, yet it does more damage to the trails in the winter than a bike with tires under 3.6" thick? I understand applying fees for cross-country skiing, since there are groomers that maintain their trails but not for biking and snowshoeing.

16 b. I would also like clarification on using my light at night. I ride in the fall after work with my kids and it is usually dark, so we need our lights for safety and security. Will this be an issue?

Answer 16

- 16a. There is a cost for snowshoers and winter bikers since these activities benefit from pre-season maintenance (pruning, trail base, bridges and so on), parking, trail signage, professional and volunteer patrollers, access to a few day shelters that are maintained and stocked with firewood, outhouses and so on.
- 16a. This fee is competitive, and less than fees charged to skiers who benefit from grooming services.
- 16b. Using headlights on trails in the evenings is not an issue.

Question 17

Why are lights used at night while mountain biking restricted? Cross-country skiers have used lights rampantly for years, but nighttime fat biking just started, and it might be banned for its lights used.

Answer 17

- The policy aims to restrict the significant impact on wildlife from intensive nighttime activities that require lighting, such as organized overnight events.

Question 18

Please review the tire size rule for winter mountain bikes; 27.5 plus should be included.

Answer 18

- The NCC meets each year with various winter user groups. Best practices are identified, and rules are revised so that those in place are suitable for good compatibility between snowshoers and winter bikers.

Question 19

Can Wellington Street be pedestrianized (with the STO tram)?

Answer 19

- The NCC is presently working in collaboration with the STO on its tramway project, along with the City of Ottawa and PSPC.

- All proposed at-grade tramway options on Wellington Street will see potential impacts on traffic circulation, planned cycling facilities and long-term plans at Parliament Hill and the Judicial Precinct.
- The potential closure of Wellington Street to vehicle traffic between Bank Street and Elgin Street is one scenario that is being examined. One of the benefits of this scenario would be the opportunity to pedestrianize this segment of Wellington Street, while still allowing tramways to traverse at slow speed.
- This requires further technical analysis, and has been requested by the City of Ottawa, who owns Wellington Street.