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00:00:07,080 --> 00:00:19,040

So hello and welcome to Capital Stories, the NCC podcast that is looking at different aspects of the history and the life and the times of the NCC as we celebrate our 125th anniversary.

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00:00:19,600 --> 00:00:29,120

And today we're joined by Barry Padolsky, Heritage Architect in the City of Ottawa and Heather Thomson, who's the Manager of the Heritage program at the NCC.

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00:00:29,480 --> 00:00:31,600

So thank you both for joining us today.

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00:00:32,040 --> 00:00:42,400

And I'm going to open up the discussion with the question of can you help us situate Ottawa in the National Capital Region in 1899?

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00:00:42,720 --> 00:00:44,840

What's happening, what does it look like?

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00:00:44,840 --> 00:00:45,920

What are people doing?

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00:00:46,320 --> 00:00:47,320

Heather, do you want to start?

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00:00:47,480 --> 00:00:48,000

Sure.

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00:00:48,000 --> 00:00:48,280

Yeah.

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00:00:48,280 --> 00:00:55,360

I think it's a really interesting question to ask about what was happening at that time, because it looked very different from what we know today.

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00:00:56,440 --> 00:01:02,400

You know, when we think about the waterways, for example, they were, the shorelines were covered in industry and factories.

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00:01:02,640 --> 00:01:06,160

The Ottawa River was full of timber and sawdust.

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And you know, so there's a lot.

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00:01:08,960 --> 00:01:11,240

I think there's - we had the old Parliament building.

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00:01:11,240 --> 00:01:20,640

So the old Centre Block was there and yet it was kind of a really ambitious time at the same time where we had... electric lights had just come in.

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00:01:21,200 --> 00:01:24,400

So Ottawa was a leader in electrification of lighting.

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We had the first car.

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Thomas Ahern drove his first car down Sparks Street.

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00:01:30,240 --> 00:01:31,600

And people were wowed by that.

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00:01:31,600 --> 00:01:34,320

But that also speaks to the fact that there were very few cars.

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There was, only, you know.

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00:01:36,720 --> 00:01:37,560

In 1899, it was just the beginning.

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00:01:37,560 --> 00:01:39,920

So there was a lot changing at that time.

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00:01:39,920 --> 00:01:42,480

It was really an important moment of change.

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00:01:43,040 --> 00:01:51,960

Barry, what would you say would be features that if we could go travel back in time, what do you think we would find remarkable about life in Ottawa in 1899?

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00:01:53,200 --> 00:02:15,800

What interested me about that time is the way in which cities were conceived, how they handled growth, and, of course, the introduction of the idea of Ottawa as the Washington of the north of Canada, as espoused by Liberal Prime Minister Laurier.

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00:02:16,200 --> 00:02:35,480

And that, I think, set off a strong, strong legacy for the federal government being involved in the shaping and imagining of Ottawa as a capital as opposed to a distinct city with the first car and all the other things that you describe.

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00:02:35,960 --> 00:02:39,040

So that would be something that was a milestone for me.

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00:02:39,480 --> 00:02:39,840

Great.

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00:02:40,080 --> 00:02:41,120

So here we are.

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It's 1899.

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00:02:42,200 --> 00:02:43,880

Wilfrid Laurier is prime minister.

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Heather, what do you think motivated the prime minister, assuming it was his decision, which I think it was, to form the Ottawa Improvement Commission?

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00:02:53,040 --> 00:02:53,600

Well, this is it.

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00:02:53,600 --> 00:03:05,600

I think as Barry mentioned, Laurier was interested in creating a capital city that was a dignified capital because, as we've just talked about, there was the Parliament buildings, which were lovely.

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00:03:06,120 --> 00:03:10,680

But around Parliament and in the city, it was an industrial centre.

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00:03:10,680 --> 00:03:25,440

And it really didn't seem to Laurier as a dignified place such as Washington. Although, and then it was very interesting because a few years later, Frederick Todd was hired to write a report about the capital and think about what the capital could become.

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00:03:25,800 --> 00:03:34,800

And he sort of corrected Laurier, because Laurier had said Washington of the North and, and Todd said, you know, actually Ottawa is not Washington.

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In fact, it has so much more to offer in a lot of ways because of its geography, because of its picturesque beauty and because of the rivers that are flowing through it.

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00:03:45,080 --> 00:04:04,880

And so he spoke about Parliament Hill and just the opportunity that the rivers and the waterways presented for a series of future parks, park spaces, and parkways to really bring people to the water, to bring health and recreation out of what you can imagine as an industrial city.

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00:04:05,360 --> 00:04:08,960

So it kind of ended up shifting the vision of what the capital could become.

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00:04:09,160 --> 00:04:12,880

And that vision has really carried through ever since.

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00:04:12,880 --> 00:04:13,920

Yeah, yeah, I think that's important.

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00:04:13,920 --> 00:04:22,080

Can we pause at Frederick Todd and understand a little bit about how he was chosen, who chose him?

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I believe he was a Bostonian or working in Boston at the time.

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How did that come about?

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00:04:26,920 --> 00:04:32,160

And tell us a little bit, Heather and then Barry about how that all happened.

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00:04:32,520 --> 00:04:36,120

And I understand maybe a connection between Todd and Olmsted.

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00:04:36,320 --> 00:04:38,720

So if you can speak to that too that would be great.

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00:04:38,840 --> 00:04:39,760

Yeah, no, absolutely.

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00:04:39,760 --> 00:04:54,600

So he was an apprentice of Olmsted essentially, but he's deemed now as Canada's first landscape architect because he had done so much work in Canada and so he's now named a person of national historic significance.

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And yeah, so he was selected to write a report basically.

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And people often refer to it as the Todd plan, but it was really essentially a report with a number of recommendations.

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But it's very interesting because those recommendations that he made carried through each and every plan afterwards in different ways.

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00:05:14,440 --> 00:05:16,680

And so it was an extremely influential report.

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00:05:16,680 --> 00:05:19,560

And yet he himself was a fairly modest person.

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00:05:19,560 --> 00:05:20,040

It's beautiful.

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00:05:20,040 --> 00:05:21,520

It's a beautiful report when you read it.

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00:05:22,200 --> 00:05:36,240

And I think one of the things that's interesting is that it was a report with recommendations at that time. The Ottawa Improvement Commission that Laurier had created didn't have the powers that the NCC has today after the creation of the National Capital Act.

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00:05:36,240 --> 00:05:37,480

And we can talk about that later on.

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So there was a series of recommendations, but it wasn't something that could necessarily be implemented very quickly right off the bat.

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00:05:47,000 --> 00:05:51,800

So that was a report with recommendations.

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00:05:51,800 --> 00:05:54,160

But some of the things were implemented very quickly.

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00:05:54,640 --> 00:06:03,120

And he admired some of the work that the Ottawa Improvement Commission was already doing, such as the creation of the Rideau Canal Driveway, which was one of the first projects, which is now Queen Elizabeth Drive.

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00:06:03,400 --> 00:06:12,240

And we forget it was really transforming the Rideau Canal, which had a very industrial character to scenic drive

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00:06:12,240 --> 00:06:18,440

toward Parliament Hill and starting to create this beautiful park and parkway network system.

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00:06:18,680 --> 00:06:18,960

Great.

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00:06:19,120 --> 00:06:19,440

Barry -

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00:06:19,440 --> 00:06:29,680

anything that you take from the Todd plan and anything that you think would be important to note in that first decade of the origins of the Ottawa Improvement Commission?

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00:06:30,160 --> 00:06:35,600

Well, I happen to live in Sandy Hill in Ottawa facing Strathcona Park.

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00:06:35,920 --> 00:06:46,000

And of course that was one of the projects of the Ottawa Improvement Commission and I've admired that and I'm fortunate enough to be able to live beside it and use it.

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So you get the feeling that you're living in the city today, that the ideas of the Ottawa Improvement Commission, the Todd Report, all have legs and they all still contribute to what we consider to be a beautiful national capital.

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00:07:06,880 --> 00:07:24,960

One of the things that we also should note from that era is that in the national aspiration to have a capital that rivals Washington in our own way, we realized that we had deficiency.

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00:07:24,960 --> 00:07:29,280

All other countries had museums, but we didn't have any.

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00:07:29,680 --> 00:07:43,000

And so the idea was, in order to compete with other countries and show that Canada is a nation on its own, a real dominion, whatever that meant, we had to build the museum.

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00:07:43,280 --> 00:07:45,960

So on the axis of Metcalfe Street,

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00:07:45,960 --> 00:07:58,240

south of Parliament, the Government of Canada acquired the property for the Victoria Memorial Museum and construction started in 1905 and completed in 1910.

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So that was object of not only civic pride, but of national pride,

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00:08:03,760 --> 00:08:07,080

to be able to have a museum.

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00:08:07,200 --> 00:08:11,520

It's like, you know, what's a city in Canada without a national hockey franchise?

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00:08:12,040 --> 00:08:12,880

You have to have one.

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00:08:13,040 --> 00:08:14,520

So we had to have our museum.

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00:08:14,520 --> 00:08:15,480

It was about the equivalent.

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00:08:16,280 --> 00:08:29,640

And of course in that museum we'd not only had the cultural history elements, but we had geological history, we had natural history, and we had the National Gallery of Canada.

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00:08:29,640 --> 00:08:31,440

They were all crammed in there.

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00:08:31,960 --> 00:08:43,760

And so that was a landmark contribution of the government to creating the institutions that are visible part of the capital.

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00:08:44,640 --> 00:08:49,000

And Barry, you've been part of the rehabilitation of that museum more recently.

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00:08:49,040 --> 00:08:50,960

That is true, yes.

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00:08:50,960 --> 00:09:04,960

I've devoted about seven years of my life to be involved with the architectural and engineering team that rehabilitated the museum and restored the tower, which is another story we can talk about.

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00:09:05,720 --> 00:09:20,400

And thinking a little bit about that museum, part of its story is that when, in 1950, when Jacques Gréber created the next plan.

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We're going to talk about this a little later in this podcast.

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00:09:23,640 --> 00:09:26,480

But Gréber said demolish the museum.

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00:09:26,800 --> 00:09:27,680

It's obsolete.

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00:09:28,160 --> 00:09:29,120

We don't need it anymore.

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00:09:29,120 --> 00:09:30,160

We'll build a new museum.

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00:09:30,720 --> 00:09:41,200

So I think that the stories that we have in Ottawa are not one continuous achievement, but a lot of stuttering,

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00:09:41,520 --> 00:09:44,240

where, looking back on things,

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00:09:44,360 --> 00:09:45,600

we might have done things differently.

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00:09:45,600 --> 00:09:49,000

Fortunately, in the case of the museum, we didn't take Gréber's advice.

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00:09:49,280 --> 00:09:49,480

Right.

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00:09:49,800 --> 00:09:59,040

Before we get to Gréber, we've got some important steps that happened between 1903 and the early 1950s.

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00:09:59,400 --> 00:10:03,240

Let's talk about the next planner, which was Edward Bennett.

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And so he gets hired by the Ottawa Improvement Commission on the recommendation of Prime Minister Borden.

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00:10:09,800 --> 00:10:17,120

Or did Borden have a role to play in encouraging the Ottawa Improvement Commission to then commission the next report?

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00:10:17,120 --> 00:10:17,360

Heather?

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00:10:17,760 --> 00:10:18,440

That's a good question.

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00:10:18,440 --> 00:10:19,880

I don't know the details of that.

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00:10:20,240 --> 00:10:20,600

I'm not sure.

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00:10:20,600 --> 00:10:21,120

Barry, do you?

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00:10:21,120 --> 00:10:21,960

Are you familiar with that?

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00:10:22,400 --> 00:10:33,720

I don't, I can't cite chapter and verse, but Borden was very, very instrumental in wanting to have a genuine plan for the capital, a more comprehensive plan.

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But go ahead, Heather.

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00:10:35,000 --> 00:10:43,000

I think that that plan built on a number of the ideas of Todd, and I'd be interested on your thoughts on this Barry,

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but did take a bit more of moving towards City Beautiful type of approach to the planning of the capital and a bit of an inspiration of Beaux-Arts kind of planning.

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And some of the recommendations once again were very interesting, but some of them today we might question such as, the main plaza that was conceived with a portion of the canal

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00:11:10,080 --> 00:11:19,000

and there are some directions that were proposed that weren't advanced, although some were also advanced.

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And so there were some.

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00:11:20,000 --> 00:11:37,840

And, in terms of architecture, I'm just thinking, Barry, what you're saying about the museum. As that plan was being developed, there was also some important architecture that was being developed in the same spirit, thinking about the Château Laurier and the new Union Station, in 1912 so shortly before the Bennett plan.

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00:11:38,480 --> 00:11:48,160

But part of this vision was supporting that type of inspirational architecture for the heart of the capital.

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00:11:48,200 --> 00:11:49,840

I don't know what your thoughts are on that.

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00:11:50,480 --> 00:12:04,920

This might be more esoterica for some of the viewers, but I highly encourage people to actually get a copy and read the Holt report, which is the Edward Bennett plan.

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00:12:04,920 --> 00:12:19,080

To me, it's fascinating reading and what I find interesting about it, and I hope that people won't be bored by this, but I think that it was the first genuinely comprehensive city plan for the capital.

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00:12:19,520 --> 00:12:26,000

It wasn't just about romance and aesthetics, it was a working plan.

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00:12:26,400 --> 00:12:29,200

It dealt with population growth.

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00:12:30,160 --> 00:13:00,640

It grappled with the idea of the capacity of the public transit systems and made recommendations like creating an underground tunnel from west to the new Union Station so that you could have both trains and street cars connecting the wider world and inter-urban and intra-urban transit.

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00:13:00,880 --> 00:13:02,760
So this was a working plan.

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00:13:02,960 --> 00:13:05,160
Bennett was a serious planner.

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00:13:05,760 --> 00:13:15,800
The work that they did or the ideas that they came up with were based on survey and evaluation and analysis.

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00:13:16,440 --> 00:13:24,320
And they were grappling with the railroads and the rail lines that went into the city, which were all higgly piggly.

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00:13:24,760 --> 00:13:30,280
And that was something that they had a strong plan for.

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00:13:31,120 --> 00:13:38,960
And the reason that I think even lay people will be interested in this plan is that it was the plan that was never carried out.

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00:13:39,960 --> 00:13:41,680
It sat on the shelf.

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00:13:41,800 --> 00:13:42,160
Why?

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00:13:42,360 --> 00:13:47,400
Because Sir Robert Borden, who was the master plan, tabled it.

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00:13:47,400 --> 00:14:03,920
It was tabled to the government in the middle of the First World War, and we were preoccupied with other things internationally, like the First World War, so beginning to implement a domestic embellishment scene or plan for the capital was seen as inappropriate.

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00:14:04,600 --> 00:14:18,160
Right after the war, the Conservative government fell from power and Liberals came in with Mackenzie King, and there was no way Mackenzie King was going to implement a Conservative plan for the capital.

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00:14:19,280 --> 00:14:21,200
So it died there on the shelf.

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00:14:21,200 --> 00:14:23,720

And it's really worth reading for that purpose.

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00:14:23,720 --> 00:14:41,080

But also, when we move forward in time and look at future master plans for the capital, there's a lot of ideas in the Bennett plan that I think were very valid from a pragmatic point of view and also from an aesthetic point of view that should be recognized.

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00:14:41,920 --> 00:14:42,080

Right.

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00:14:42,760 --> 00:14:43,520

Did you want to add something

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00:14:43,520 --> 00:14:43,600

Heather?

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00:14:43,840 --> 00:14:57,000

Well, just the streetcar system which was so vibrant from the 1890s onwards and then the idea that later those [streetcars] were removed.

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00:14:57,000 --> 00:15:16,200

I think that's one of the [things] many people today lament as something that the Gréber Plan advocated later on. This is where some of the elements of the earlier plan, were more integrated in terms of thinking about a variety of aspects, including the public transit site.

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00:15:16,240 --> 00:15:16,440

Yeah.

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00:15:16,440 --> 00:15:32,040

And for those people that take the LRT today – as they transit the tunnel under the core of the capital, getting off at the stations that are now created, this is now 2024.

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00:15:33,080 --> 00:15:36,400

That alignment was actually forecast by Bennett.

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00:15:36,680 --> 00:15:39,440

He recommended the tunnel more or less along that alignment.

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00:15:39,560 --> 00:15:40,920

That took us 100 years to do it.

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00:15:42,880 --> 00:15:48,160

So, you've already mentioned Mackenzie King, Barry, and so now here we are in the 1920s.

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00:15:48,800 --> 00:15:57,040

Can we speak a little bit about him as prime minister, his interest in the capital and his relationship with Jacques Gréber?

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00:15:57,200 --> 00:15:58,120

Heather, do you want to start?

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00:15:58,840 --> 00:15:59,200

Sure.

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00:15:59,200 --> 00:15:59,520

Yeah.

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00:15:59,520 --> 00:16:03,600

I think he had met Gréber earlier on in the twenties, thirties...

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00:16:03,600 --> 00:16:11,080

I don't recall, but he met him early and invited Gréber to come and meet with him and talk about the capital.

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00:16:11,080 --> 00:16:20,400

And they did some more early work together around Confederation Square and the idea of the War Memorial, the design of the War Memorial location

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00:16:20,400 --> 00:16:24,440

and then invited him back to really take a hard look at the Capital.

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00:16:24,440 --> 00:16:27,000

But he was coming from a certain perspective.

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00:16:27,000 --> 00:16:34,920

He did come from the school of Beaux-Arts planning, but also in this kind of vein, moving towards sort of modernist ideas.

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00:16:34,920 --> 00:16:38,240
So he had some very dramatic plans.

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00:16:38,240 --> 00:16:42,640
It was the area era of big plans, coming in and top down.

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00:16:42,640 --> 00:16:45,800
There wasn't engagement or consultation in these plans.

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00:16:46,160 --> 00:16:54,960
And I think there was some ruffled feathers about this in terms of him coming from away and giving advice from afar.

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00:16:55,040 --> 00:16:57,480
But he was a very respected planner at that time.

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00:16:57,480 --> 00:17:01,000
And so King brought him in, he developed this plan.

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00:17:01,000 --> 00:17:20,640
Dramatic changes came out of that plan, whether it's the creation of the Greenbelt expansion and formal creation of the Gatineau Park, the re-localization of the rail lines, which was transformative, to remove all of the rail lines.

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00:17:20,920 --> 00:17:42,200
And because not only was it a plan in that case, but then a few years later with the national creation of the National Capital Act, the NCC really had expropriation powers, had funds, had the ability to implement that plan and move forward with very dramatic transformations of capital, many of which we appreciate today,

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00:17:42,200 --> 00:17:45,480
and some of which are quite a difficult legacy.

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00:17:45,480 --> 00:17:55,920
Thinking about the clearing of the LeBreton Flats, for example, and some of the other projects that we sort of look back and have a mixed feeling about.

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00:17:56,320 --> 00:18:01,720
So let's situate just in terms of timelines, Gréber's relationship to the capital.

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He's here in the thirties.

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00:18:03,000 --> 00:18:13,880

We also get a war interrupting planning in the capital, and then he returns after the Second World War to finish the plan, which gets published what, in 1950?

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00:18:13,880 --> 00:18:14,160

Nineteen.

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00:18:14,160 --> 00:18:15,400

1949.

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00:18:15,480 --> 00:18:17,760

Right.

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00:18:18,280 --> 00:18:31,520

Thinking about Gréber, who's French, who had done some work in the United States, I believe, before coming to Ottawa. What do we take from the fact that Todd is American, Bennett is American, Gréber is French?

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00:18:31,880 --> 00:18:51,440

Do we see that as a sign of confidence that we were looking for the best planners worldwide to help catalyze the construction of the capital or was it a little bit more the fact that Canada just didn't have at that point some of that expertise?

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00:18:51,440 --> 00:18:55,880

Barry, what's your take on the fact that we are, we are drawing from abroad for this?

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00:18:55,880 --> 00:19:00,640

Do you see that as a positive sign of Canada's maturity during those decades?

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00:19:01,360 --> 00:19:07,280

Well, I think that Canada had a growing planning capability.

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00:19:07,920 --> 00:19:14,520

It wasn't as experienced and didn't have the prominence that you had in other countries.

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00:19:14,960 --> 00:19:22,560

But it is important to recognize the role of the prime minister at the time.

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00:19:23,280 --> 00:19:34,640

And I think that he was somebody that had a global look at where Canada should be in the world.

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00:19:34,880 --> 00:19:43,600

And so he wasn't hesitant about identifying and meeting greats from other places and importing them into Canada.

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00:19:44,480 --> 00:19:52,440

I mean, Mackenzie King, when there was rubble from

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00:19:52,800 --> 00:19:53,640

the Carnegie Library,

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00:19:53,640 --> 00:20:00,840

he would bring pieces in. He was not afraid to import things that he thought would contribute to the richness of Canada.

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00:20:02,120 --> 00:20:07,880

I think that we're talking about the Gréber Plan.

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00:20:08,400 --> 00:20:19,360

One of the things we need to recognize about it was that it recognized a growing capital city, an exponentially growing capital city.

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00:20:20,000 --> 00:20:31,680

At the time that the plan was tabled in 1949-1950, we had about 250,000 people living

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00:20:32,080 --> 00:20:34,000

in the Ottawa-Gatineau region.

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00:20:34,640 --> 00:20:39,640

And his plan was forecasting a doubling of the population.

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00:20:39,640 --> 00:20:42,720

How should we deal with the doubling of our population?

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00:20:43,280 --> 00:20:57,520

So it wasn't just about, embellishing the federal presence, complementing the park, the buildings and having avenues, and Confederation Square and things like that.

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00:20:57,920 --> 00:21:12,240

It was a nuts-and-bolts plan that was to deal with the realities of a real city, and I think that's one of the things about the Gréber Plan that needs to be recognized.

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00:21:13,080 --> 00:21:24,160

But then I guess one of the challenges of the plan is his population expectations were highly underestimated.

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00:21:24,160 --> 00:21:27,880

I think he had expected doubling the population by the year 2000.

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00:21:28,280 --> 00:21:32,480

And in fact, the population was doubled within 15 years of the plan being published.

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00:21:32,480 --> 00:21:35,840

So, I think this is where the baby boom and what was going on.

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00:21:36,440 --> 00:21:40,160

People didn't anticipate quite the dramatic change in population that would take place.

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00:21:40,160 --> 00:21:51,120

And that's where, now people have criticized that development hopped the Greenbelt, the idea was the Greenbelt was mostly meant to contain development.

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00:21:51,120 --> 00:22:01,840

It's interesting with the Gréber legacy, because although some of those things are true, there's so much that we still do appreciate from what was done at that time.

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00:22:01,840 --> 00:22:20,800

Even the removal of the rail lines where people ask 'why did we take the train station out of downtown?' at the same time we now have these parkways such as Colonel By Drive and experience in the capital that is enhanced in many ways as a result of some of those changes.

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00:22:20,800 --> 00:22:26,200

Hindsight is difficult to look back on sometimes.

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00:22:26,200 --> 00:22:27,320

And really.

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00:22:28,360 --> 00:22:28,600

Yeah.

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00:22:28,800 --> 00:22:47,240

Yeah, if I can, Heather, I'm very interested in the Gréber Plan, not just from an academic perspective, but from a visceral, experiential perspective, because I came to Ottawa from Winnipeg as a young architect in 1961.

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00:22:48,040 --> 00:22:54,320

And this was just two years after the National Capital Commission was created.

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00:22:55,080 --> 00:23:01,920

And what we know is that the government wanted to act on the Gréber Plan.

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00:23:01,920 --> 00:23:03,720

It wasn't just a paper plan.

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00:23:04,760 --> 00:23:16,440

And it took them a few years to mobilize for it, and they realized that you quite rightly said, that you needed to have an instrument to actually be able to realize the vision.

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00:23:16,920 --> 00:23:26,280

And that instrument was put into legislation, the National Capital Act, which gave the National Capital Commission an enormous amount of power.

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00:23:27,040 --> 00:23:52,360

And when I arrived in, I think it was May of 1961, by train from Winnipeg, arriving at Union Station and looking around me as a young architect and walking up the front door of the station, seeing the Château Laurier, looking to my left, Confederation Square, East Block, the Peace Tower, I thought I'd arrived in heaven.

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00:23:53,160 --> 00:23:55,200

And I thought this is where I want to live.

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00:23:55,200 --> 00:23:56,720

This is where I want to make my career.

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00:23:57,120 --> 00:24:00,160

And this is a very livable city.

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00:24:01,080 --> 00:24:16,080

And interestingly, at that time, the population of Ottawa, I think was about... Ottawa-Gatineau was about 400,000, and today it's 1.4 million.

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00:24:16,200 --> 00:24:23,680

So I have seen in my professional life in Ottawa growth of the capital by a million people.

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00:24:24,680 --> 00:24:34,160

And one of the things that became of interest to me was the role of the National Capital Commission and its influence.

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00:24:34,160 --> 00:24:35,880

I thought there was no one else in Ottawa.

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00:24:35,880 --> 00:24:48,800

I didn't know that there was even a City of Ottawa administration because the ascendancy of the NCC at that time and its aggressiveness in implementing the Gréber Plan was enormous.

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00:24:49,320 --> 00:24:59,640

I mean the creation of the Greenbelt at that time of my arrival, all the lands were being expropriated as we spoke, right?

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00:25:00,160 --> 00:25:06,520

You know, it was happening in real time while I was discovering my way in Ottawa.

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00:25:07,200 --> 00:25:25,760

And the same thing with the creation of Tunney's Pasture, a federal employment sub-centre that was intended to basically distribute the federal public service in regional sub-centres, in district centers.

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00:25:26,440 --> 00:25:28,080

And the same thing with Confederation Heights.

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00:25:28,400 --> 00:25:33,920

These were all being done through expropriations, through building.

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00:25:34,560 --> 00:25:52,640

And, so this was a period of enormous activism, making the Gréber Plan and implanting it in the capital in real time and of a nature which was authoritarian.

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00:25:53,400 --> 00:25:57,560

There wasn't much consultation with the City of Ottawa or then the City of Hull.

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00:25:57,960 --> 00:26:10,760

It was an activist NCC that was literally changing the face of the capital in an enormous way, not just downtown, but as you said, the relocation of the railways.

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00:26:11,160 --> 00:26:16,320

Gréber in fact recommended the demolition of Union Station.

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00:26:17,120 --> 00:26:21,040

What kind of interest in heritage conservation did Gréber have?

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00:26:21,040 --> 00:26:21,760

Not very much.

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00:26:22,760 --> 00:26:35,520

And I remember that I was very fortunate in the mid-1960s to be a young architect working for Hart Massey Architect.

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00:26:36,200 --> 00:26:58,640

And Massey was engaged by the National Capital Commission to work on the Confederation Square revisioning and, at that time, as a kind of transformation or a realization of the Gréber plan for a large Confederation Park in the centre of the city rivaling Central Park.

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00:26:59,160 --> 00:27:22,640

It was rethought by the NCC having engaged John Parkin, John B. Parkin Associates, to update the core of the Capital plan, and I was involved with Massey in trying to update the Gréber Plan on that.

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00:27:23,120 --> 00:27:52,880

And it basically called for replacement of the Union Station with a new convention centre, a place for being able to have conferences and redeveloping all the railway lands to a government complex and updating the Confederation Square area with things like a new National Arts Centre still to come.

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00:27:53,240 --> 00:28:00,240

But anyway, this is a very important period of time that I was able to see on the ground and have some small part.

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00:28:01,160 --> 00:28:02,040

Yeah, that's a great story.

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00:28:02,280 --> 00:28:08,400

One of the things that we should be clear about is we started in 1899 with the Ottawa Improvement Commission.

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00:28:08,400 --> 00:28:14,960

We sort of skipped over the name change to the Federal District Commission in the intervening years.

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00:28:15,120 --> 00:28:22,200

But then in 1959, we have the creation of the National Capital Act and the formal name change again to the NCC.

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00:28:22,600 --> 00:28:31,280

And what you're saying, Barry, is in those early years of the NCC's existence in that form, [there was] very ambitious implementation of the Gréber Plan.

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00:28:31,680 --> 00:28:34,360

Heather, you mentioned the removal of the tracks.

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00:28:34,360 --> 00:28:44,920

What are some of the other key moves that we saw throughout the 1960s that you think are most important to mention in terms of that first decade of the NCC's existence?

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00:28:45,520 --> 00:28:46,080

Well, this is it.

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00:28:46,080 --> 00:28:49,920

I think, as Barry mentioned, it was just so transformative and ambitious.

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00:28:50,320 --> 00:28:53,760

And you know the term you're using, activist, is very interesting.

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00:28:53,760 --> 00:28:59,920

But I there's a lot of interesting themes here to talk about.

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00:28:59,920 --> 00:29:18,800

The removal of the railway lines, the expropriations in the Greenbelt, the LeBreton Flats. A lot of these big dramatic changes also came with, you know, just thinking about, we've been doing more recently quite a bit of oral history with people who are affected by some of these changes in the past.

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00:29:19,720 --> 00:29:28,960

And I think that's where some of this activism or very proactive stance by the NCC was sometimes met with some hardship - thinking about the expropriations.

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00:29:29,000 --> 00:29:38,880

As we've been doing our work on LeBreton Flats, we've done some oral history there and talking about how people receive notices that they were evicted and very shortly thereafter their homes were demolished.

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00:29:39,040 --> 00:29:43,800

Same thing was happening in the Greenbelt where we had farmers that were being expropriated.

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00:29:44,360 --> 00:29:48,200

In some cases, those farms were leased back to some of the same individuals.

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00:29:48,200 --> 00:29:57,160

But in other cases those farms were destroyed and the lands reforested, which today we appreciate as we travel around the Greenbelt, some beautiful forests and natural areas.

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00:29:57,360 --> 00:30:00,320

Some of those had been farms and had been expropriated.

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00:30:00,960 --> 00:30:05,320

Same thing in the Gatineau Park going forward and creating a lot of what we have in the Gatineau Park, which we appreciate.

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00:30:05,320 --> 00:30:12,720

But of course, some of these things were acquired through somewhat dramatic measures right through expropriations and acquisitions.

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00:30:12,720 --> 00:30:27,200

So that's one thing that is a little bit of a difficult thing, but I'm interested to explore with you, Barry, this tension I think that existed at that time between new development and redevelopment and conservation.

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00:30:27,200 --> 00:30:37,640

Because the other thing that the NCC was doing in the sixties was looking at... there was a really interesting report that the NCC created in 1961, just as you were arriving in Ottawa, called Our Vanishing Heritage.

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00:30:38,040 --> 00:30:47,120

And it identified a whole series of important buildings from a heritage conservation perspective that should be acquired by the NCC in order to protect them.

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00:30:47,760 --> 00:31:09,720

And one big project that came out of that was the Mile of Canadian History project, which was to acquire a lot of the buildings along Sussex Drive as part of the ceremonial route between Rideau Hall and Parliament Hill to protect a lot of those significant heritage structures, restore them, bring them back to life and make sure that that area was conserved.

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00:31:09,720 --> 00:31:19,320

So it's an interesting tension that exists where there are some areas that were being actively protected by the NCC and then other areas that were being completely redeveloped.

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00:31:19,920 --> 00:31:21,000

I don't know, what are your thoughts

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00:31:21,000 --> 00:31:22,200

on that? I'm glad you brought that up.

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00:31:22,720 --> 00:31:33,720

I think that when I arrived there was not much public interest in heritage conservation, remembering post-war Canada.

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00:31:34,040 --> 00:31:35,880

It was all about new.

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00:31:36,400 --> 00:31:51,280

It was all about the flight to the suburbs where people could have a backyard and they could bring up their children and there was a vacating of the core of the city and a lot of neglect of buildings.

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00:31:51,680 --> 00:31:59,560

And yes, the NCC... I have always admired as a leader in heritage conservation

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00:32:00,080 --> 00:32:18,360

and this is a great opportunity to talk about the unknown architects that worked for the NCC, such as John Leaning, the chief architect for the NCC at the time, who I knew, and people like Hazen Sise.

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00:32:18,800 --> 00:32:40,040

This doesn't mean much to anybody in the public, but Sise was a 1960s architect that was brought by the NCC to lead the inventory of historic buildings that should be conserved in the capital.

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00:32:40,560 --> 00:32:46,880

And the NCC had planners [and historians] like... was it Robert?

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00:32:48,240 --> 00:32:49,480

Robert, not Hughes.

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00:32:49,560 --> 00:32:51,000

I can't remember his name, Biggs.

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00:32:51,040 --> 00:33:01,880

I can't remember his name. But him [Robert Haig] and Michael Newton, who did amazing inventories of buildings that you can rely on today for their accuracy.

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00:33:02,600 --> 00:33:15,280

And Hazen Sise, for instance, was very much an advocate in the effort to conserve the Rideau Convent and Rideau Convent Chapel in 1971.

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00:33:15,880 --> 00:33:29,160

And when I came back from studying urban planning in Scotland in 1969, having abandoned the capital here for about two years, but it was worthwhile

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00:33:29,160 --> 00:33:42,000

I think. What Sise did was, he wrote the reason that the Rideau Convent Chapel should be designated as a national historic site.

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00:33:42,600 --> 00:33:57,120

No protection for it, but out of that effort, the NCC and the National Gallery of Canada were able to acquire the pieces of the Chapel that you now see in the National Gallery of Canada.

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00:33:57,120 --> 00:34:07,320

So that shows that heritage conservation side of the NCC quite early in its leadership capacity for understanding the cultural value of the past.

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00:34:08,320 --> 00:34:08,920

Absolutely.

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00:34:08,920 --> 00:34:18,240

And I think some of those things led to the creation of the federal Framework for Heritage Conservation, the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office, which the NCC was key in helping to implement.

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00:34:18,240 --> 00:34:24,200

And, and so as you said, I think there was this real push to an interest in heritage conservation by the NCC at that time.

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00:34:24,720 --> 00:34:38,160

But at the same time, there were some of these other things going on where there was active redevelopment, and also some interesting new architecture, which as you mentioned, the creation of the National Arts Centre, the new Ottawa train station.

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00:34:38,160 --> 00:34:45,520

So also this new architecture, which has since become heritage national historic sites and federal heritage railway stations.

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00:34:45,520 --> 00:34:48,280

So it's an interesting shift there, yeah.

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00:34:48,880 --> 00:35:02,120

You know, Heather, I think [as] you sort of alluded to, the architecture at that time was intentionally experimental.

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00:35:02,840 --> 00:35:20,240

It was in the modernist language, whether it's brutalist or the rationalist, park and railway station. By the way, just the other day I

took the train from Ottawa to Toronto and back again and went through the Tremblay Road

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00:35:20,720 --> 00:35:22,920
station, the relocated Union Station.

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00:35:23,440 --> 00:35:30,200
And it holds up as a great piece of modernist architecture without parallel.

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00:35:30,440 --> 00:35:37,920
It maybe is my favourite modern building in the capital, and I invite people to go and see it and admire it.

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00:35:38,760 --> 00:35:44,600
Maybe it's just subjective because I knew John Parkin, but nevertheless it's a great piece of architecture.

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00:35:45,160 --> 00:35:49,480
I want to turn from architecture back to planning in the 1960s.

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00:35:49,840 --> 00:35:52,760
We've talked about the Rideau Canal parkways.

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00:35:52,960 --> 00:35:57,000
We haven't yet talked about the Sir George Étienne-Cartier Parkway and the Kichi Zibi Mikan.

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00:35:57,000 --> 00:36:05,240
Heather, can you take us a little bit back to the history of how those were created - when - and what was their initial purpose?

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00:36:05,720 --> 00:36:05,880
Yeah.

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00:36:05,880 --> 00:36:20,320
If you look to the east to start off, the Sir George-Étienne-Cartier Parkway [then] the Rockcliffe Parkway [and] Rockcliffe Park had already been established even at the time that Frederick Todd had been hired to do his report.

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00:36:20,320 --> 00:36:24,920

And he had looked at expanding Rockcliffe Park and saying, hey, there's a great opportunity here.

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00:36:25,160 --> 00:36:34,600

And he recommended extending that parkway as well... to head out in that direction.

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00:36:34,600 --> 00:36:43,680

So with the subsequent plan, [Todd] recommended that the Parkway be extended all the way to what became the Greenbelt, which has now been done.

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00:36:44,640 --> 00:36:47,120

And so Rockcliffe was the beginning of that.

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00:36:47,120 --> 00:36:53,200

And at that time in the early days, there was still the streetcar that that took people along the parkway there.

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00:36:53,200 --> 00:36:54,520

And then eventually that was changed.

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00:36:54,680 --> 00:36:58,600

It was interesting at that time, and again connecting to some of what Barry was talking about earlier,

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00:36:58,800 --> 00:37:18,080

Rockcliffe Park in the middle of the century was so popular that the NCC was saying we have to create new parks such as what became Vincent Massey and Hog's Back because Rockcliffe was jammed with people and they needed to think about other ways for people to be able to get out and enjoy public space, green spaces.

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00:37:18,080 --> 00:37:19,840

And so that's interesting.

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00:37:19,840 --> 00:37:34,520

Sir George Étienne-Cartier Parkway now is really a legacy of multiple iterations of a plan that had been established early on, as had what was started as the Ottawa River Parkway.

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00:37:35,680 --> 00:37:41,520

In a similar vein this was all part of the ideas that Todd had that were also espoused through the Holt Bennett plan.

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00:37:41,520 --> 00:37:43,080

And then eventually the Gréber Plan.

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00:37:43,080 --> 00:37:46,920

But the Gréber Plan, as we said, was able to say, hey, we're removing the railway lines.

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00:37:46,920 --> 00:37:50,680

And then the NCC had the ability to go forward with that.

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00:37:50,680 --> 00:37:53,560

So in the 1960s, the rail lines were removed.

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00:37:53,560 --> 00:37:55,680

They started to build the Parkway.

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00:37:55,840 --> 00:38:07,440

One thing that was very interesting about the Ottawa River Parkway, though, is that the NCC at that time was writing conference submissions about the importance of aesthetics on these parkways.

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00:38:07,440 --> 00:38:15,160

Because I think with the movement in the 1960s, there were a lot of what were being called parkways, that were really becoming highways.

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00:38:15,160 --> 00:38:21,320

And so the idea was they were losing a lot of their aesthetic quality, even if they were still in waterfront locations.

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00:38:22,120 --> 00:38:29,120

And the NCC was really advocating for the importance of aesthetics and natural beauty and vistas and views.

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00:38:29,400 --> 00:38:33,880

And so what we don't necessarily recognize today about the Ottawa River.

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00:38:33,960 --> 00:38:42,040

Now the Kichi Zibi Mikan parkway is the landscape architecture of that parkway, which is very intentional.

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00:38:42,040 --> 00:38:48,040

When you're driving along or on the multi-use path, you have spectacular views that are not accidental.

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00:38:48,880 --> 00:38:51,560

They are designed as part of that experience.

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00:38:51,920 --> 00:38:56,640

And even the vegetation and other choices that were made along the design of that parkway were very intentional.

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00:38:56,880 --> 00:39:05,880

And some of the details of the bridges and underpasses were carefully designed to create that beautiful visual experience.

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00:39:06,720 --> 00:39:08,400

So yeah, just a note on that.

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00:39:08,400 --> 00:39:09,760

I know Barry wanted to mention it.

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00:39:10,600 --> 00:39:19,120

I... that's a very interesting point about the parkways and the deliberateness with which the NCC built them.

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00:39:19,440 --> 00:39:39,680

And it gets to another tension point that I'd like to pose maybe as a hypothesis to the two of you, which is I'm always struck when I go back and I read the Bennett Plan and the Gréber Plan by the focus on the private automobile, the focus on the need for parking, the need for routes through the capital.

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00:39:39,840 --> 00:39:45,320

It seemed that both, to various extents, were very car focused.

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00:39:45,320 --> 00:39:57,400

It surprised me more with Gréber as a European, someone who was, you would think, conscious of the value of the older city, in the form of the older city.

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00:39:57,800 --> 00:40:00,320

But nonetheless, you see this huge emphasis.

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00:40:00,520 --> 00:40:14,000

And then in the early 1970s you get Douglas Fullerton, who's heading the NCC, who is no fan of the private vehicle and starts to, I think, create an ethos of, we need to think more about

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00:40:14,080 --> 00:40:19,680

public access and issues around environmentalism. The environmental movement is growing now.

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00:40:19,680 --> 00:40:24,080

In the early 1970s, Douglas Fullerton creates Sunday Bikedays.

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00:40:24,760 --> 00:40:31,320

At that point, Ottawa is only the third or fourth jurisdiction in North America to introduce the concept of the open street.

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00:40:31,880 --> 00:40:32,440

Fullerton,

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00:40:32,440 --> 00:40:34,920

we need to credit with the Rideau Canal Skateway too.

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00:40:35,360 --> 00:40:58,920

And so is it fair to say, Barry, that in the 1970s you start to see this shift in transportation planning and maybe a shift in the role that the NCC sees for itself in the execution and the promotion of some of these other, maybe a little a bit more, I guess we'd call it now, progressive movements in some of these areas?

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00:40:58,920 --> 00:41:00,240

Or is that a simplification?

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00:41:01,200 --> 00:41:22,560

I think it's a very good question, a very good topic, and I think that it should be seen in the change of public values generally and post Second World War, we of course in North America and in Europe had a love affair with the private car.

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00:41:22,840 --> 00:41:29,240

This was about freedom, it was about independence, it was about escaping the congestion of cities.

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00:41:29,840 --> 00:41:36,000

And so it is understandable it was also promoted by Standard Oil and was promoted by General Motors.

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00:41:36,200 --> 00:41:43,240

They wanted people and Ford to drive cars and to, you know, to consume the carbon that is now plaguing us.

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00:41:44,200 --> 00:41:59,080

I think that your question actually relates to transformation and the expectation of the public to participate in decision-making about cities.

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00:42:00,000 --> 00:42:22,000

And what is also worth segueing back to, as you mentioned earlier about the Federal District Commission in 1927, created by the Government of Canada. That was based on the assumption that the capital would benefit from being governed as a federal district.

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00:42:22,320 --> 00:42:49,560

This should be mentioned because this was a stream that, a sequence of prime ministers from Laurier and on, including Mackenzie King, imagined that we should be a federal district, like Washington, like some of the other federal districts, and that this would be exemplary to the rest of the country of how to plan and build a city.

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00:42:49,560 --> 00:42:59,600

If you build the capital right, it'll be the example of the rest. That diminished in the 1950s and in the 1960s.

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00:43:00,200 --> 00:43:29,720

And one of the things that your question about car-oriented culture and the transformation to active transportation, as we call it now in public transit, happened as people in many cities demanded that their local governments, that they have a voice in local government, and that the local governments take a more environmental stance, conservation stance, and putting more emphasis on public transit.

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00:43:30,200 --> 00:43:45,120

And in the 1960s I was involved as a student or at least as a young architect activist in the master planning process of the capital that was undertaken by the Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton.

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00:43:45,680 --> 00:44:06,080

So at the provincial level in Ontario and in other provinces, it became understandable that the small municipalities that existed needed to have a larger idea of governance for infrastructure for transportation, sewers and things like that.

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00:44:06,080 --> 00:44:25,120

So this was a transformational point in the capital in the late 1960s where the responsibility for planning of the city region shifted to local government.

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00:44:25,880 --> 00:44:42,720

And the role of the NCC, in my view, began to be more specialized in landscape, such as the parkways and other things that were a narrower federal jurisdiction.

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00:44:43,600 --> 00:44:54,520

And the public was demanding the ability to have a voice and they were electing city councillors like young radicals

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00:44:54,520 --> 00:45:10,240

in Toronto – you had John Sewell, in Ottawa, you had Brian Bourns and Marion Dewar and all of these activists that were committed to thinking of the city as a whole and governance from a municipal level.

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00:45:10,680 --> 00:45:12,600

So this is the period of time

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00:45:13,000 --> 00:45:19,440

and the NCC, with leaders like Fullerton were very, very sympathetic to that.

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00:45:20,000 --> 00:45:32,800

And I think that it was at that time, with the Fullerton report on the governance of Canada and the Massey Commission report, all these are esoterica that only historians like you would be interested in.

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00:45:33,080 --> 00:45:44,320

But that was a point of transition where let's just say the people took control of the agenda and it had to do with neighbourhood conservation.

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00:45:44,920 --> 00:45:49,360

And I think a lot of that Fullerton adopted as well.

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00:45:49,720 --> 00:45:52,760

I think this is so interesting what you're saying, Barry, and I think that's so important.

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00:45:52,760 --> 00:46:00,320

You're right about the movement to be involved in the planning, which had not been the case as we talked about with Gréber and some of the framework.

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00:46:00,560 --> 00:46:07,960

Although I think in terms of the car, I would say also that I think Fullerton was actually maybe bringing the NCC back to its roots

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00:46:07,960 --> 00:46:14,200

because in a sense, and we talked about this in the beginning, but the Rideau Canal Driveway, it was not for cars.

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00:46:14,920 --> 00:46:17,880

There were only a few cars in Ottawa at the time.

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00:46:18,160 --> 00:46:21,400

It was for horse and carriage, it was for cycling, it was for walking.

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00:46:21,600 --> 00:46:25,360

People were using that driveway for recreation.

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00:46:25,520 --> 00:46:31,040

And what Todd envisioned was also driveways, parkways that were not for cars.

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00:46:31,120 --> 00:46:36,480

Even though cars were coming along, the idea of the car was very different than what we think of it today.

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00:46:36,480 --> 00:46:51,360

And that's one thing that I think has been a challenge, is probably, Fullerton was seeing what we sometimes see as challenges with the parkways, where they'd become simply commuter routes and they're not appreciated for the scenic values and the recreational values that they were intended.

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00:46:52,000 --> 00:47:01,320

And I think that's, as you said, creating the Skateway and emphasizing the importance of these places as for recreation and for..

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00:47:01,320 --> 00:47:06,120

And we've been doing this study about the Rideau Canal lately with Parks Canada and the City of Ottawa.

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00:47:06,120 --> 00:47:14,000

And we keep hearing some of those same themes coming out – that people value the Rideau Canal and its environment so much for its health benefits.

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00:47:14,280 --> 00:47:27,760

It echoes of Todd again, about the health and wellness of people in the city to be able to get into these green spaces and have a bit of respite from the city, even though the respite of our city today is not the same as in 1899.

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00:47:27,840 --> 00:47:30,360

But still people need those green spaces.

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00:47:30,360 --> 00:47:33,200

So I think that's where people [are] calling out for some of that as well.

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00:47:34,160 --> 00:47:40,840

As you said, that's people being more involved in the planning, but it's also bringing us back to some of the ideas that we had at the beginning.

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00:47:41,480 --> 00:47:51,120

We've been talking a lot so far in this conversation about men and men planning, and I want to move to the 1990s and talk a little bit about Jean Pigott.

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00:47:51,480 --> 00:47:58,200

Heather, do you want to introduce her and tell us what you think some of her most important contributions were?

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00:47:58,880 --> 00:47:59,760

Well, this is it.

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00:47:59,760 --> 00:48:12,640

I'm so glad you raised this because, Tobi, when you asked the question about 1899... [in] 1899, women didn't have the vote, right?

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00:48:12,640 --> 00:48:32,880

Women could not express, they didn't have a power politically in that manner and they wouldn't for another almost 20 years. So what was happening in 1899 and what was happening even later in the Gréber years, although we had really strong mayors like Charlotte Whitton, who were forces to be reckoned with.

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00:48:33,480 --> 00:48:36,520

A lot of the planning and decision making of that period

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00:48:36,520 --> 00:48:47,880

was, you know, was being met by men; although I will say, just on the heritage conservation side, in the background, there were a lot of women working, from even as early as the 1890s.

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00:48:47,880 --> 00:48:57,440

And people like the wife of Wilfrid Laurier, Zoé Laurier, helped to create the Canadian Women's Historical Society, which is now the Historical Society of Ottawa.

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00:48:58,520 --> 00:49:06,080

And, there were a number of women who were working in the conservation side for those hundred years, roughly, in the background.

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00:49:06,080 --> 00:49:09,880

And often, even the wife of Thomas Ahearn, Margaret.

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00:49:09,880 --> 00:49:22,120

So other people who were movers and shakers in the capital. We think of the men, but there are actually a lot of women who were active in the background, as you were mentioning Barry, people whose names we forget over time.

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00:49:22,440 --> 00:49:33,320

But Jean Pigott, I think is one name we will not forget because she became so recognized for her work at the NCC and representing the NCC.

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00:49:33,320 --> 00:49:45,960

And when I speak with former colleagues who worked with her at the NCC, they just talk about her passion for the capital and Confederation Boulevard... I think is one of her biggest accomplishments.

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00:49:46,120 --> 00:50:04,840

The idea of creating this, not only a physical sort of a loop, but a discovery route, a way for people to be experiencing the capital on both sides of the river and with all these important sites and landmarks that are part of that route and creating a special identity for that.

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00:50:05,600 --> 00:50:06,040

And you know what?

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00:50:06,040 --> 00:50:13,640

When we talked to some of our former colleagues who knew her, it's really interesting to hear about her passion for the capital.

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00:50:13,640 --> 00:50:16,520

And I think how that kind of carried through, and it's hard,

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00:50:16,760 --> 00:50:26,080

I think probably you agree Tobi, that it's hard not to work for the NCC and kind of continue to feel some of that passion for the capital that I think she really advocated at that time.

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00:50:26,800 --> 00:50:27,400

I don't know if Barry...

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00:50:27,440 --> 00:50:30,480

You, Barry, you probably had an opportunity to see her in action.

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00:50:30,480 --> 00:50:39,200

So I did, and I had been in her office a few times and benefited from the cookies that she served, which were delicious.

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00:50:39,360 --> 00:50:42,880

I don't know if she did them herself that morning or whether she got them from the bakery.

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00:50:43,200 --> 00:50:52,200

But yeah, my recollection of Jean Pigott was as an activist, a cheerleader. She was inspiring.

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00:50:52,200 --> 00:50:53,800

She was a motivator.

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00:50:54,240 --> 00:50:59,000

And but she also had political skills, political savvy.

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00:50:59,280 --> 00:51:01,000

I mean, she came from a political background.

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00:51:01,320 --> 00:51:04,560

And so she knew the art of the possible as well.

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00:51:05,440 --> 00:51:07,960

So I have nothing but high regard for her.

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00:51:07,960 --> 00:51:28,080

That period of the nineties that she led was also the continuation of the period of, I would like to candidly say, the specialization of the NCC in looking after the elements of the city that were..

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00:51:28,080 --> 00:51:31,240

I don't want to be disparaging about this because I love it so much.

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00:51:31,480 --> 00:52:13,240

But of the federal theme park, we have to kind of recognize that the federal presence in the capital was intentionally created to highlight institutions, the avenues. When we look at Hull-Gatineau, now we see the federal presence there, but it's in the form of massive office buildings and I don't think that that represents what we really hoped it would represent on the Quebec side of the river.

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00:52:13,240 --> 00:52:21,560

It was more like a thumping federal statement that we have a footprint in Quebec now and we have these thousands of employees there.

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00:52:21,840 --> 00:52:25,960

But Jean Pigott with the Confederation Boulevard

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00:52:25,960 --> 00:52:38,800

idea, was trying to recognize the Quebec side of the capital in a way that had not really been attempted before.

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00:52:39,160 --> 00:52:44,040

And so I give her a lot of credit for that, but also her ability to control people.

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00:52:44,440 --> 00:52:55,560

I want to skip into the 21st century because we only have a few minutes left and two themes that we haven't touched on, but I think are important when I think about the more recent history of the NCC,

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00:52:56,400 --> 00:52:58,160

one is Indigenous reconciliation.

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00:52:58,560 --> 00:53:04,040

We've talked in this podcast about the origins of the NCC beginning in 1899.

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00:53:04,360 --> 00:53:13,240

Of course, there are thousands of years of history of the Algonquin people being here in the areas that now constitute the National Capital.

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00:53:13,640 --> 00:53:33,000

And with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we've seen by the NCC a very ambitious implementation of a number of different recommendations and really, I think being quite forward in terms of establishing early connections and engaging in meaningful consultation with the Algonquin people.

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00:53:33,600 --> 00:53:35,200

So I think that is worth mentioning.

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00:53:35,440 --> 00:53:46,520

A second theme that I want to mention is, we've talked a lot about the work that happened after the Gréber Plan in terms of removing the railways and opening up the waterways.

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00:53:46,800 --> 00:54:05,320

I feel like that has become a very relevant theme in the 21st century and certainly in the last 10 years, where there is a recognition, not just by the NCC, but by cities worldwide, that waterways represent a real opportunity for public spaces for engagement with water.

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00:54:06,000 --> 00:54:09,480

And so we're seeing that now with the NCC in a number of its projects.

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00:54:10,680 --> 00:54:18,640

I'm inviting you a little bit as we try and come to 2024 to either comment on either of those themes.

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00:54:18,640 --> 00:54:24,920

Or is there anything else you think would be important that you wouldn't want to finish this conversation without mentioning?

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00:54:25,000 --> 00:54:27,560

Anything else you feel we haven't touched on yet?

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00:54:28,720 --> 00:54:37,000

Barry, is there, is there anything else, when you think about certainly the NCC of the last 25 years or 30 years, that you think it would be important to mention?

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00:54:37,920 --> 00:54:42,280

Yeah, in terms of making sure that our conversation has touched on some of the major

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00:54:42,280 --> 00:54:42,680

issues.

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00:54:43,200 --> 00:54:54,040

Well, I certainly welcome the efforts to translate the Truth and Reconciliation commissions and the call to action.

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00:54:54,200 --> 00:54:59,160

I think the NCC and the Government of Canada are making an effort there now in the capital.

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00:55:00,200 --> 00:55:14,040

Some of it may very well be just symbolic and cosmetic, not necessarily affect the lives of people that are living in Vanier or are living on reservations.

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00:55:14,960 --> 00:55:27,240

But nevertheless, I think that it is an important move, as well as the work of recognizing the beauty of the rivers that intersect this capital.

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00:55:27,720 --> 00:55:46,560

I think that I would like to look forward to the next 125 years in the capital and ask the question: What should be the role of the federal government and the NCC in the next 125 years?

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00:55:47,120 --> 00:56:04,880

And certainly my perception of the governance of the capital area now with municipal governments, the provinces and the federal government all as players and the inability that we still have in coping with growth.

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00:56:06,320 --> 00:56:20,520

We're now at 1.4 million in Ottawa-Gatineau and Statistics Canada along with other agencies that monitor population growth in Canada...

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00:56:20,520 --> 00:56:39,160

And given our immigration policies right now, which are bringing in more than half a million people a year to the country, the forecast for Ottawa-Gatineau by 2067 is that we will probably have another million people.

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00:56:40,600 --> 00:56:50,720

So we're talking about Gréber's plan... was for an addition of population from 250,000 to 500,000.

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00:56:51,440 --> 00:56:57,200

We are now faced with, in the next 25-30 years, another million people.

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00:56:57,880 --> 00:57:21,600

So what is the role of the NCC to be in helping to guide the accommodation of these people, the public transit infrastructure, all the things that were in the master plans of the past, and I look at our current plan for the Canada's capital and through 2067, it does not address these questions.

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00:57:21,880 --> 00:57:27,080

Well, that's going to have to be a subject for a future podcast because we're running out of time on this one.

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00:57:27,080 --> 00:57:29,360

But you ask an important question, Barry.

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00:57:29,600 --> 00:57:36,320

And I actually, in all seriousness, do think that would be a good topic of conversation for a future conversation?

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00:57:38,000 --> 00:57:41,040

Heather, I want to give you a chance just to say, what have we missed?

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00:57:41,040 --> 00:57:46,040

Is there anything that you would want to note, particularly in terms of the recent history of the NCC?

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00:57:46,440 --> 00:57:57,480

Well, I think your point about Indigenous truth and reconciliation... I think this is a really important topic that, as we're talking about 1899 to today, we haven't really focused on that, but I think it's a key, it's a key aspect.

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00:57:57,480 --> 00:58:08,520

And I guess that first part about just truth, more recently people are recognizing, and the NCC is recognizing, that we are on unceded territory.

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00:58:08,520 --> 00:58:12,200

You know, that basically the Algonquin Nation, this is their traditional territory.

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00:58:13,160 --> 00:58:17,160

And I think that's an important thing to just start with.

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00:58:17,360 --> 00:58:19,040

Is that piece about truth.

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00:58:20,080 --> 00:58:23,520

And then I think there is work that we are doing.

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00:58:23,520 --> 00:58:26,040

I mean, we still have a lot of work to do.

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00:58:26,040 --> 00:58:36,600

And I think in the face of growth and other pressures that we have, this is going to be all the more important to work with the Algonquin Nation and others around the waterways and future planning.

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00:58:37,040 --> 00:58:43,640

But it's been interesting, as one of the members of the Toponymy Committee on the NCC side.

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00:58:43,640 --> 00:58:59,320

I think, it's been really exciting to be part of the renaming of some of the parkways, whether it's the Ottawa River Parkway, which became Sir John A. MacDonald, to now Kichi Zibi Mikan, but also the Kiweki Point, which had been previously Nepean Point.

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00:58:59,320 --> 00:59:04,800

Bringing the Algonquin language into the public realm is so important.

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00:59:04,800 --> 00:59:26,520

And then, some of the work that our colleagues in archaeology are doing, in particular working with the Anishinàbe Odjibikan Field School, for example, where in Leamy Lake Park, uncovering, 8000 years of history, thousands of years of history and working with the Algonquin Nation, the young people who are working as part of that field school.

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00:59:27,600 --> 00:59:30,320

These are artifacts that are from their ancestors.

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00:59:30,320 --> 00:59:36,320

It's, I think this is the type of thing that is really exciting and important, looking forward.

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00:59:37,080 --> 00:59:37,400

Great.

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00:59:37,520 --> 00:59:41,400

Well, I want to thank you both for joining me in this conversation.

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00:59:42,080 --> 00:59:45,080

You can only hit the highlights in this kind of podcast.

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00:59:45,080 --> 00:59:58,600

You can't talk about all of it, but I think we did our best and you did a wonderful job of helping us understand a little bit some of the key moments and key themes in the history of the NCC and its predecessors.

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00:59:59,000 --> 01:00:01,800

So, Barry, Heather, thank you very much for joining us today.

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01:00:02,080 --> 01:00:03,160

And thank you for having me.

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01:00:03,240 --> 01:00:03,840

Thanks so much.

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01:00:05,790 --> 01:00:18,270

And that wraps up this episode of Capital Stories. Join us next time as we continue to celebrate the triumphs, reflect on the challenges, and peer into the future of the National Capital Region. Thanks for joining us.