

GATINEAU PARK OUTDOOR ACTIVITY PLAN



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT

MARCH 2013



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1 CONSULTATION BACKGROUND

As part of its mandate to manage Gatineau Park, the National Capital Commission (NCC) is developing an Outdoor Activity Plan (OAP) to address the issues raised by the Gatineau Park Master Plan (2005) and the Ecosystem Conservation Plan (2010). These plans set out the principles, priorities and recommendations that must be taken into account in developing outdoor activities.

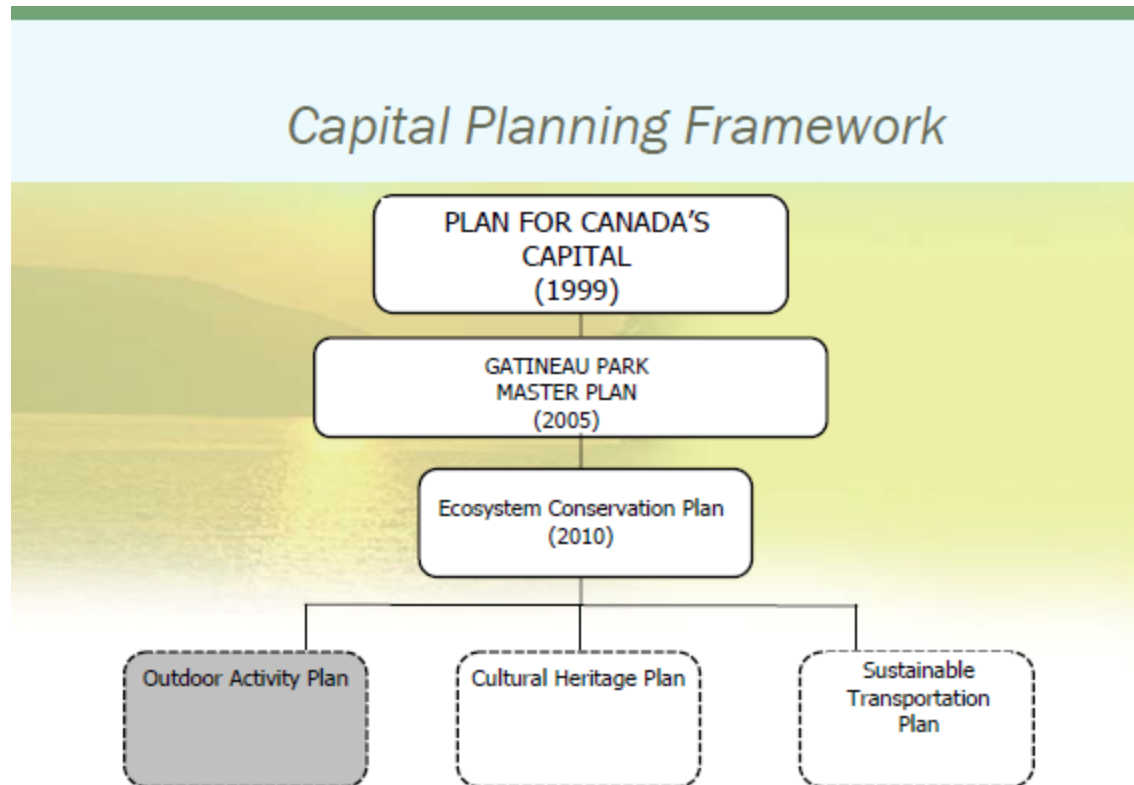
The OAP's main goal is to provide coherent planning and intervention frameworks for outdoor activities, as well as infrastructures and services that are to be developed, modified or eliminated in order to optimize visitor experience and to maximize the Park's Ecosystem Conservation Plan's reach.

Through a series of concrete measures and in keeping with conservation objectives and underlying management principles, the OAP seeks to further elaborate the desired level and type of outdoor activities in the Park, as well as the role and capacity of the Park's recreational areas.

The Outdoor Activities Plan is based on a planning process whose cornerstone is the 1999 Plan for Canada's Capital that affects all of the NCC's activities. The Gatineau Park Master Plan (2005) follows the Plan for Canada's Capital guidelines and includes the Park's main objectives and key guidelines that are integral to the National Capital's development vision. The NCC developed the Gatineau Park Ecosystem Conservation Plan, which is directly under the Master Plan in importance, and thus subordinating the other plans such as the Outdoor Activities Plan. Adopted in 2010, it proposes the following vision for the Park:

“Gatineau Park is a model of innovation and sustainable environmental management, preserving the integrity of its ecosystems and exceptional ecological diversity through innovative management measures focused on the notions of ecosystem and cooperation.”

Over the next few years, this vision must transcend the development of the three sector plans that will affect outdoor activities, sustainable transportation and the preservation of the Park's cultural heritage.



The OAP was prepared in two phases. A first public consultation was held in the fall of 2009 to validate the work completed during the plan's Phase I (diagnosis, vision, mission and guiding principles). Most participants expressed their agreement with the guidelines, but raised certain usage issues and suggested ideas to improve the supply of outdoor activities.

The second public consultation allowed users to comment on Phase II of the plan (directions, areas of intervention and strategies). Following these consultations, adjustments were made to the OAP and a final version will be submitted to NCC's Senior Management Committee for approval.

1.1 Objective of the Public Consultation

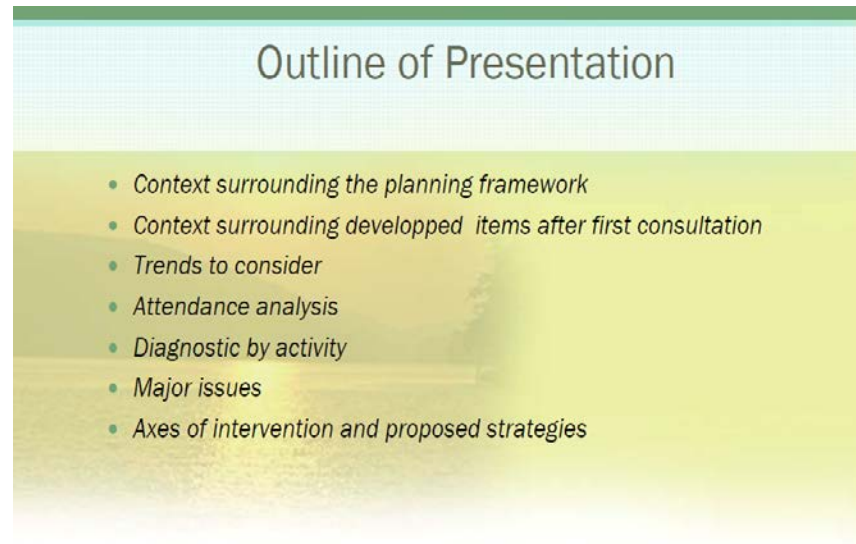
The consultation objective was to hear citizens' views on implementation priorities for the proposed strategies. It was explained that the options for changing recreational services are limited by the desire to preserve the Park's ecological integrity as well as by budgetary constraints. The online consultation questionnaire is annexed hereto; the questions covered the following topics:

- Improving the level of service at the various entrance gates
- Multiplying information and interpretation channels by making better use of new technologies
- Enhancing the experience on the summer trail system and for cross-country skiing enthusiasts
- Developing new snowshoe trails
- Enhancing lodging services in the areas surrounding Philippe Lake and La Pêche Lake
- Improving networks of cycling links identified in the Gatineau Park Sustainable Transportation Plan
- Adopting guidelines for the management of events
- Developing mountain biking and winter walking trails outside the Park
- Developing volunteer programs
- Establishing dialogue groups with users

1.2 Consultation Process

Interested citizens were able to complete an online questionnaire available on the NCC website from January 13 to February 19, 2012. A public meeting in workshop format was held from 9:30 am to 12 pm on Saturday, January 28 2012 at the Best Western Hotel, 131 Laurier Street, Gatineau, QC. Approximately fifty participants attended the workshop and 800 participants completed the survey.

By visiting the NCC website, participants had access to a "PowerPoint" type presentation that displayed the following table of contents:



The online survey included a dozen topics and nearly 60 focus areas or strategies that needed to be prioritized. Respondents also had the opportunity to comment on other topics related to the Park's outdoor activities.

The workshop, which was held on January 28th, was conducted in four stages:

- An overview of the situation was provided by the Park's Director;
- The main topics, which were also available in the online document, with a particular emphasis on focus areas and proposed strategies, were presented by the consultant;
- A workshop that lasted approximately 90 minutes in which the participants were asked to prioritize the proposed strategies in groups;
- A plenary-type session was held in which each group was able to present their three most important ideas that arose from their discussions.

The public consultation was promoted through the following means:

- A press release issued by the NCC on January 13th, 2012.
- An announcement posted on the NCC's website homepage from January 13th to February 19th, 2012.
- An email to the NCC's Public Affairs database (over 2,500 members), which included a number of people or groups that the Park's management team knew were interested.
- Advertising on Facebook and in the print media, including Le Droit, the Citizen and a few community newspapers (See appendix 2).

2 RESULTS OF ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

2.1 Profile of respondents

Close to 800 people completed the questionnaire (Appendix 1). The respondents' profiles were as follows:

- User type:
 - ✓ 56% of respondents consider themselves "outdoor enthusiasts"
 - ✓ 38% consider themselves "sports enthusiasts"
 - ✓ 4% consider themselves "occasional outdoor enthusiasts"
 - ✓ 2% see themselves as "occasional users"
- Frequency of visits to the Park:
 - ✓ 61% of respondents visited the Park more than 21 times per season
 - ✓ 34% made 5 to 20 visits per season
 - ✓ 4% made 1 to 4 visits per season
 - ✓ 1% made 1 visit or less per season
- Place of residence¹ :
 - ✓ 59% of respondents live in Ottawa
 - ✓ 18% live in Gatineau
 - ✓ 15% live in Chelsea
 - ✓ 5% live in La Pêche, Pontiac and Val-des-Monts
 - ✓ 3% live elsewhere

To properly assess the level of interest of respondents, the answers to closed questions were divided as follows:

Category 0	Categories 1 and 2	Categories 3, 4 and 5	Categories 4 and 5
Non-recommended strategy	Low-priority strategy	Priority strategy	High-priority strategy

¹ 588 respondents identified their place of residence

In addition, 497 comments were provided through the comments section of the questionnaire. All comments received were analyzed and a summary of the comments is included in this section.

2.2 Focus areas, comments and NCC responses

AREA 1: REPOSITION RECREATIONAL SERVICES WITH THE GENERAL POPULATION AND USERS WITH A VIEW TO ENCOURAGE RESOURCE PRESERVATION AND RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR RECREATION

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

GENERAL STRATEGY: INFORM EACH USER ON THE PARK'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL VALUE

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES PROPOSED:

- ✓ Produce a communications plan for Gatineau Park to support the Park's vision, educate users and encourage them to become the Park's ambassadors and protectors
 The plan will include:
 - The deployment of required strategies and tools, especially by implementing Internet and social media strategies as well as integrating existing platforms.
- ✓ Develop a Volunteer Ambassador Program

Online questionnaire:

- ✓ **Downloadable information is the preferred tool:**
 - 72% believe this is a priority strategy
 - 51% believe this is a high-priority strategy
- ✓ Facebook, Twitter and blogs are not preferred communication tools:
 - Facebook: 38% believe this is a priority strategy
 - Blogs: 33% believe this is a priority strategy
 - Twitter : 25% believe this is a priority strategy

Additional comments

- ✓ Many respondents consider that a downloadable map of trails (hiking, skiing) should be very high on the agenda.

NCC response:

Priority should be given to downloadable information, particularly to a downloadable map of trails (hiking, skiing):

The NCC appreciates this feedback and will focus its efforts on the development of downloadable information as resources become available. Summer and winter versions of the Park's trail map are available in "PDF" form on the Park's website. The NCC is currently exploring options to make user interactive maps available through its website.

AREA 1: REPOSITION RECREATIONAL SERVICES WITH THE POPULATION AND USERS WITH A VIEW TO RESOURCE PRESERVATION AND RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR RECREATION

CODE OF ETHICS

GENERAL STRATEGY: TO REDUCE USER CONFLICTS AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES PROPOSED:

- ✓ Update and disseminate codes of ethics for different users and partners
- ✓ Ensure presence in the field to enforce established codes of ethics
- ✓ Focus on the *Leave No Trace* philosophy and the shared use of spaces

Additional comments:

- ✓ More aggressively promote better road sharing between motorists and cyclists.
- ✓ Provide increased surveillance on the trails to ensure compliance with the code of ethics and the proper use of trails.

NCC response:

Promote better road sharing:

A communication strategy has been in place during recent years to promote better road sharing. This consists in better signage and in the increased presence of the RCMP, an important partner in upholding traffic laws for all users. The NCC will continue, in collaboration with police forces, to promote road sharing. The success of any awareness campaign also lies in the self-discipline and accountability of users; their commitment is essential.

Increased surveillance on the trails:

The Park's financial resources are limited and it has no plans to increase the presence of paid staff (patrol or conservation officers). Thus, increased monitoring of trails and the promotion of the code of ethics will be based on available resources. The promotion of codes of ethics will continue with the tools in place or upon renewal of such tools. The success of any campaign also lies in the self-discipline and accountability of users; their commitment is essential. If the Volunteer Ambassador Program is developed, it will also be a tool to promote good behaviour.

AREA 1: REPOSITION RECREATIONAL SERVICES WITH THE POPULATION AND USERS WITH A VIEW TO RESOURCE PRESERVATION AND RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR RECREATION

RECEPTION

GENERAL STRATEGY: TO PROVIDE A PROPER RECEPTION AND GUIDANCE THAT WILL ENABLE USERS TO ENJOY THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE CAPITAL'S CONSERVATION PARK

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

PROPOSED:

- ✓ Review and maximize the levels of service according to the prioritisation of entrance gates

Online questionnaire:

- ✓ Only a third of respondents identified the improvement of services at entrance gates as a priority strategy. Two entrance gates are slightly advantaged: Chelsea and the southern gateway:
 - Chelsea : 36% of respondents believe this is a priority strategy, and 20% believe it is a high-priority strategy
 - Southern gateway (Gamelin) : 36% believe this is a priority strategy, and 20% believe it is a high-priority strategy
 - Philippe Lake: 35% believe this is a priority strategy, and 18% believe it is a high-priority strategy
 - Relais plein air: 33% believe this is a priority strategy, and 17% believe it is a high-priority strategy

NCC response

Improving services at entrance gates:

Due to the requirements of this mandate, welcoming visitors to the Park, especially visitors to the capital, remains a priority for the NCC. The NCC understands that respondents consider that improved services at entrance gates are not a priority and are satisfied with the current situation. However, the NCC would like to continue its efforts to improve these services at the entrance gates to meet the needs of visitors to the capital.

Relais plein air:

Relais plein air will be one of the NCC's priorities since it is already accessible by public transport and because respondents to the public consultation on the Gatineau Park Sustainable Transportation Plan (in progress) identified the lack of access to the Park by public transit as being a key issue.

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

NETWORK OF SUMMER TRAILS

Hiking

GENERAL STRATEGY: MAINTAIN A SIMILAR NETWORK WHILE FURTHER DEVELOPING STANDARDS AND PRODUCT PACKAGING

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES PROPOSED:

- ✓ Improve trail design to enhance visitor experience
- ✓ Design trails and infrastructures related to hiking based on conservation objectives and trends
- ✓ Implement the recommendations identified in the master plan

Online questionnaire:

- ✓ **The creation of loop circuits is considered an important strategy in promoting visitor experience:**
 - 67% of respondents believe this is a priority strategy
 - 47% believe this is a high-priority strategy

Additional comments:

- ✓ There is a need to review the trails' maintenance and design standards, especially where widening and gravel surfacing is concerned, as they greatly reduce the hike's "nature" experience
- ✓ Provide or maintain access to the Park via certain sectors (e.g. Hollow Glen (Chelsea) and Luskville)

NCC response:

Creation of loops on the hiking trail network

The NCC agrees with the priority given to loop circuits. Maintenance standards will be upgraded to keep the trails looking as natural as possible. During reconstruction, concepts such as slope, angle, etc., will be considered, as well as the environmental impact of the work. The NCC will build on the sustainability of the trails and take the necessary measures to promote low maintenance, taking into account the unusually high number of visitors to the Park, as well as the multi-seasonal functions to which the trails must adapt.

Access to the Park through certain sectors:

Access to the Park via the Eardley Escarpment poses particular challenges because of this area's integral conservation zoning category. The NCC will maintain the current access leading to the Luskville Falls trail. In addition, as part of the Sustainable Transportation Plan (under development), certain options will be considered to improve access to the Park, including reopening, in the medium-term, the parking lot on Eardley-Masham Road and, over the longer term, possible access through a trail along Notch Road.

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

Mountain Biking

GENERAL STRATEGY: MAINTAIN A SIMILAR NETWORK WHILE FURTHER DEVELOPING STANDARDS AND PRODUCT PACKAGING

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES PROPOSED:

- ✓ Improve trails to encourage visitor experience
- ✓ Develop trails and infrastructure related to mountain biking based on conservation objectives and trends
- ✓ Solve identified problems

Online questionnaire

- ✓ **The creation of a loop circuit is considered an important strategy to promote visitor experience:**
 - 67% of respondents believe this is a priority strategy
 - 53% believe this is a high-priority strategy

Additional comments:

- ✓ The development of a greater number of mountain biking trails is as much a priority among biking enthusiasts as among hikers. According to comments, the two groups' coexistence on the trails has become increasingly problematic.
- ✓ Emphasis must be placed on developing single track trails in accordance with IMBA (International Mountain Bike Association) norms as well as on the use of unofficial trails.
- ✓ The widening and surface graveling of trails makes no sense to several respondents, as this could increase the likelihood of cyclists skidding on the trails.

NCC response:

Creation of circuit loops on the network, growing conflicts between users and the creation of trails exclusively dedicated to mountain biking (especially "single track" trails):

The NCC agrees with the priority given to loop trails. The identification of potential loops will be on the basis of the existing network and will include the links needed to achieve this goal. Since the Gatineau Park Master Plan indicates that the maximum ratio of trails is close to full capacity in all areas of the Park, this must be done without increasing the trail network's total number of kilometres.

The NCC will consult with OMBA / IMBA to define the sequence in which to develop loops. The NCC will consider the Park's zoning and environmental impacts to define which loops can be created, since the creation of such loops will either imply the transformation of certain hiking trails into trails shared with mountain biking activities, or the addition of short segments. Potential user conflicts will be taken into consideration.

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

CNN response (continued):

The NCC has heard the desire to create trails dedicated to mountain biking. However, with the exception of Camp Fortune, the OAP's proposal does not include trails reserved specifically for mountain biking within the Park; all trails will have to be shared with hikers. The NCC encourages regional stakeholders to work together to identify areas in the region where the needs expressed by mountain bikers could be met. These trails could be developed in collaboration with municipalities outside the Park. It is also proposed that the Park contribute to the promotion of external sites that offer experiences that are not available on its territory.

The NCC has heard the requests to develop "single track" trails. Modifying the current network, which was developed for cross-country skiing, represents a considerable challenge, especially considering the Park's will to maintain the multifunctional use of these trails. When renovating trails or creating loops, the NCC will explore innovative avenues, including IMBA suggested approaches. As mentioned above, all trails will have to be shared with hikers.

Disagreement with widening trails and gravel surfacing, which is the current standard:

The NCC has heard comments on widening trails and graveling their surface. Maintenance standards are evolving as well as the Park management's vision of this issue. The dialogue between IMBA and OMBA in recent years has also contributed to this shift. Maintenance projects conducted by volunteers should promote manual labour at the expense of working with machinery, which should fulfill user requests.

Regarding the use of gravel, the NCC will upgrade its standards based on those developed by IMBA and Parks Canada. The NCC will review the slopes and whether it is necessary to move certain segments to avoid skidding. These technical standards, which tend to move away from the use of gravel and large trails, will be applied during the reconstruction of trails, depending on available resources and according to the width of the trail and its vocation (multi-season or not). The NCC will build on the sustainability of trails and will take the necessary measures to promote low maintenance, taking into account the unusually high number of visitors to the Park as well as the multi-seasonality of trails.

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

Geocaching

GENERAL STRATEGY: MAINTAIN THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITIES

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

PROPOSED:

- ✓ Maintain agreements with clubs to allow the concentration of geocaching sites on the official trail network and to avoid putting geocaching sites located in conservation areas online
- ✓ Manage and use geocaching as a way to raise awareness and discover natural environments

Additional comments:

- ✓ Geocaching should continue to be offered in the Park.
- ✓ Orienteering courses should also be offered in the Park.

NCC response:

The NCC will continue to allow geocaching under the existing guidelines. It will also continue to work with orienteering and geocaching clubs. Orienteering clubs with which the NCC has agreements provide activities or orienteering races on the Park's territory.

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

Unofficial trails for hiking, mountain biking and other outdoor activities

GENERAL STRATEGY: REDUCE THE NUMBER OF KILOMETERS OF UNOFFICIAL TRAILS, ESPECIALLY IN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

PROPOSED:

- ✓ Study the impact on the environment and on user safety of creating and using unofficial trails for hiking, mountain biking and other outdoor activities in order to reach a decision as to their closure

Additional comments:

- ✓ According to comments, it is considered that they must be maintained. They are regarded as a common good, having been established for several decades, and their relatively low intensity use is conducive towards the discovery of the “nature” aspect of the Park, thus resulting in fewer adverse effects on the ecology of the surrounding area.
- ✓ Mountain bikers consider this to be an established asset that should be promoted.

NCC response:

The NCC has heard the comments requesting that access to unofficial trails be allowed. The NCC will review the situation from several perspectives:

- As a priority, the Master Plan recommends the preservation of ecosystems and natural habitats. The unofficial trail system will be reviewed on the basis of this priority.
- The NCC will identify trails that pass through environmentally sensitive areas and trails whose use has caused harm to the environment. Closing these trails will be a priority.
- The NCC recognizes the desire of users to have access to a backcountry experience. It will work with users, including outdoor clubs and volunteers, to strictly enforce the *Leave No Trace* philosophy.
- The NCC's approach will take into account the high number of visitors to the Park and the natural environment's carrying capacity limits.
- The NCC notes that some unofficial trails on the escarpment have been established and marked over the past five years. Therefore, the NCC cannot agree with the argument that the entire network of unofficial trails has been established for several decades.

Additional information on the *Leave No Trace* philosophy can be found on the following website:
<http://www.leavenotrace.ca/home>

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

NETWORK OF WINTER TRAILS

Cross-country skiing

GENERAL STRATEGY: MAINTAIN A SIMILAR SIZE NETWORK WITH SOME ADJUSTMENTS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT CLIMATE CHANGE AND CHANGES IN THE MIX OF CLIENTS

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

PROPOSED:

- ✓ Improve trails to encourage visitor experience
- ✓ Design trails and infrastructures related to cross-country skiing on the basis of conservation objectives and trends
- ✓ Solve identified problems

Online questionnaire:

- ✓ An improvement in communicating ski conditions is the strategy deemed most important:
 - 70% of respondents believe this is a priority strategy
 - 50% of respondents believe this is a high-priority strategy
- ✓ A shuttle service between the city and the most popular trails is the second strategy that should be implemented:
 - 58% of respondents believe this is a priority strategy
 - 43% of respondents believe this is a high-priority strategy
- ✓ Increasing the capacity of shelters and implementing a multi-service starting point are two other strategies that could be prioritized, although to a lesser extent:
 - *Increasing the capacity of shelters:* 54% feel that this is a priority strategy and 33% consider this high-priority strategy
 - *Implementing a multi-service starting point:* 48% feel that this is a priority strategy and 31% consider this a high-priority strategy
- ✓ Adding waxing rooms and increasing the number of heated starting points are the lowest-rated strategies:
 - *Adding waxing rooms:* 43% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 24% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Increasing the number of heated starting points:* 42% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 27% consider this a high-priority strategy

Additional comments:

- ✓ The use of cross-country skiing trails by snowshoers represents a major usage conflict. Suggestions: add snowshoeing trails, increase monitoring and establish better signage on the use of trails.
- ✓ The grooming of cross-country skiing trails (regularity and quality of grooming) is another source of dissatisfaction.
- ✓ The information on cross-country skiing conditions found on the website is not satisfactory (conditions updated *daily*, new snow [24 h., 48 h., and 1 wk.]).
- ✓ A reception area should be built in an easily accessible location or close to starting points with services for cross-country skiing and other winter sports. The construction of new heated shelters is also requested.
- ✓ Adding or upgrading tracks (e.g. one way, beginners, advanced) to diversify the experience.
- ✓ The implementation of a shuttle service or a public transit system with Ottawa-Gatineau should also be extended to other periods.

NCC response

Unsatisfactory ski condition information on the website:

The NCC has heard the priority given by users to improve ski conditions information and in particular for snowfalls. The constant improvement of ski conditions on the website remains a priority for the Park's team. Even if the site was completely redesigned for the 2011-2012 season, it is expected that adjustments will be made for the 2012-2013 season. Statistics showing daily precipitations should be included in the new version.

Adding a shuttle or public transportation:

The NCC will define optimal conditions and funding sources that would be necessary to implement such a service. To ensure success, the NCC is considering a link between a shuttle in the winter and the creation of one or more heated starting points. The opportunities and challenges related to accessing energy sources for starting points will be considered. This will be further explored in the Sustainable Transportation Plan.

Low priority given to the development of heated starting points with ski services and interest shown in increased shelter capacity:

The NCC understands that adding waxing rooms and heated starting points is less of a priority for respondents. These facilities could however be added if they are essential to the success of other projects, such as the introduction of a shuttle, or if they allow for greater access to the Park for priority clients (e.g. visitors to the nation's capital). Within this context, improving services at the Relais Plein Air is considered a priority by the NCC due to its strategic location on the public transportation network.

The NCC will examine opportunities for adding or expanding heated shelters, subject to funding for their creation and their regular maintenance.

Growing user conflicts between skiers, snowshoers and hikers, and signage on the trails:

The NCC will continue to heighten the awareness of snowshoe, ski and hiking enthusiasts on the trails' various uses. This year, to educate all users, the Park has released a code of conduct prepared by users and intended for users. This approach will continue to be implemented in the coming years.

CNN response (continued):

The Park's financial resources are limited and we have no plans to increase the presence of paid staff (patrol or conservation officers). Increased trail monitoring and the promotion of a code of ethics will therefore be based on available resources. Promotion of the agreed upon codes of ethics will continue with the tools in place or on the renewal of such tools. The success of any campaign lies in self-discipline and accountability of users, their commitment is essential. If the Volunteer Ambassador Program is developed, it will represent an additional tool to promote good behaviour.

Signage is used sparingly so as not to distract from the Park's natural setting. Moreover, experience has shown that regulatory signage has limited impact and very little effect on users who are not fully aware of the issues. On the trails, some users simply decide to ignore the signs.

Concern over the maintenance of cross-country ski trails:

Ski trail maintenance standards are available on the Park's website. Here are some of the highlights:

	Primary Trails	Secondary Trails	Tertiary Trails
Prior to the start of the season	The trails are cleared of branches and debris, and culverts are built to manage wetlands.		
At the start of the season	As soon as the snow accumulation on the ground reaches 10 cm , work is carried out to produce the base. A 48-hour period is required to carry out the work.	As soon as the snow accumulation on the ground reaches between 10 cm and 20 cm , work is carried out to produce the base. A 48-hour period is required to carry out the work.	Mechanical work is not required. The trails are patrolled on a regular basis to determine ski conditions, recommend or not recommend a trail and ensure that there are no obstructions such as fallen debris. Employees carry out the work manually.
Regular maintenance	The trails are groomed at least 4 times a week . Work is carried out every Friday and Saturday evenings, which provides good conditions on Saturday and Sunday (peak days). Work is also carried out once or twice during the week.	The trails are groomed at least 3 times a week .	
Accumulation of more than 5 cm of snow	A 24-hour period is required to carry out the work.	A 48-hour period is required to carry out the work.	

The 2005 Master Plan and the OAP currently being developed has encouraged the NCC to adopt service standards aimed at providing a recreational experience to suit everyone's needs. These standards were developed in order to provide a quality experience while maintaining the Park's mission and staying within the organization's budgetary constraints. The NCC is committed to ensuring compliance with the standards described above, but does not intend to add to these standards.

CNN response (continued):

It should be noted that the contractor (Demsis) mandated by the NCC for the maintenance of cross-country ski trails has to contend with increasingly unpredictable winter weather. Despite this fact, for the last ski season (2011-2012), the NCC has received numerous positive comments with regards to the performance of the Demsis team. Moreover, a recent user satisfaction survey shows that 97% of winter visitors are satisfied or very satisfied with their experience.

Adding or upgrading cross-country ski tracks to diversify the experience:

The NCC has a 200 km network of trails that meet the diverse needs of various clients (beginner intermediate or advanced) and will not add trails. It must, first and foremost, consider the environmental impact of developing new trails and its financial capacity to maintain new facilities.

To improve existing trails (e.g. the creation of one-way trails), the NCC will consider these comments in the medium and long term planning of its network of ski trails. A first reading leads us to believe that the creation of one-way trails would result in increasing the trail system's complexity which is already quite difficult to communicate to the different users.

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

Snowshoeing and winter walking

GENERAL STRATEGY: INCREASE THE PARK'S CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE MORE VISITORS WHILE PRESERVING ITS ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES
PROPOSED:

- ✓ Develop snowshoe trails mainly in the Philippe Lake and Meech Valley sectors to meet the demand
- ✓ Evaluate all existing winter trails and their use to increase snowshoeing / hiking while maintaining fairness among users

Online questionnaire:

- ✓ According to respondents, priority should be given to the development of snowshoe trails in the Pink Lake, Meech Valley and Philippe Lake sectors:
 - *Meech Valley sector:* 59% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 38% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *South of Pink Lake sector:* 59% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 38% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Philippe Lake sector:* 52% feel of respondents that this is a priority strategy and 32% consider this a high-priority strategy

Additional comments:

- ✓ The addition of new snowshoe trails, particularly in the south and north sectors (with a heated shelter) and in the King Mountain area, was mentioned several times.
- ✓ Better signage with regards to the use of trails (at intersections and along the trails) is also suggested.
- ✓ Increase the number of trails accessible to dogs.

NCC response:

Addition of new snowshoe trails:

The NCC agrees with the priorities given to different sectors for the development of snowshoe trails, particularly in the Meech Valley and in the area south of Pink Lake; the latter is of particular interest because of its accessibility to public transit. The recent addition of snowshoe trails originating in Relais Plein Air is a step in that direction.

In order to establish its priorities, the NCC will consider how regional supply is being developed. The development of new trails will be linked to the availability of financial resources in order to establish and manage such trails. The Park's capacity to accommodate visitors will also be considered. The most recent estimates show that the Park already receives 300,000 visitors during the winter season, and that their visits can reach up to 900,000 individual visits; the cumulative effect on the environment of this attendance level will have to be considered.

NCC response (continued)

Increasing the number of trails accessible to dogs:

The NCC acknowledges the suggestion to increase the number of trails accessible to dogs. NCC Animal Regulations, which are ratified by Parliament, currently determine the accessible paths / trails.

The number of trails accessible to dogs during the winter season is much more limited than during any other season due to the fact that the winter season is a particularly stressful time for the Park's wildlife. The presence of dogs is limited on the Park's territory during the winter season to avoid adding unnecessary stress. The priority is to protect natural resources and the quality of the visitor experience. It is also important to note that for many, the presence of dogs on the trail significantly affects their experience.

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

LODGING SERVICES

GENERAL STRATEGY : UPGRADE LODGING SERVICES TO MAKE THE PARK A POPULAR DESTINATION FOR VISITORS TO THE CAPITAL

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

PROPOSED:

- ✓ Improve lodging services to better address new market trends
- ✓ Upgrade facilities and infrastructure in the La Pêche sector
- ✓ Improve site design and infrastructure services at Lac Philippe campsites
- ✓ Improve the booking system in partnership with the contractor in charge of operations

Online questionnaire:

- ✓ Yurts are the preferred type of lodging for the La Pêche Lake and Philippe Lake sectors, followed by tent platforms and Huttopia tents for the La Pêche sector, and only Huttopia tents for the Philippe Lake sector:
 - La Pêche sector:
 - Yurts: 47% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 24% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Tent platforms: 43% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 22% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Huttopia: 39% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 19% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Glamping: 15% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 7% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Philippe Lake sector:
 - Yurts: 51% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 27% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Huttopia: 44% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 20% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Camp-ready tent trailer: 17% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 7% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Spaces for recreational vehicles: 13% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 6% consider this a high-priority strategy

Additional comments:

- ✓ A few negative comments on the online booking system.

NCC response:

Lodging/Camp-ready and online booking system:

The NCC has heard the comments and the suggested prioritization per sector. For the Philippe Lake sector, the NCC will make it a priority to install camp-ready installations such as yurts and tent-like Huttopias. Although respondents did not support spaces for recreational vehicles, the NCC will consider the spaces when it plans to upgrade the campsite. These spaces are for visitors to the capital, a clientele that is at the heart of the NCC's mandate.

With regards to the La Pêche Lake area, which currently specializes in canoe camping, the NCC agrees with the identified priorities, namely camp-ready installations (yurts and tent-like Huttopias) and the installation of platforms for lightweight tents. The NCC has noted the lack of interest in "glamping" among survey respondents. This type of accommodation is more intended towards visitors to the capital. The NCC will test this particular concept before investing its resources in this type of service.

NCC will seek to improve the reservation system together with the contractor responsible for this service at the Park, while taking into account available resources and the return on investment.

AREA 3: A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND THE VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

ACTIVITIES ON THE PARKWAYS

Biking

GENERAL STRATEGY: ENSURE THE HARMONIOUS SHARING OF PARKWAYS

**SPECIFIC STRATEGIES
PROPOSED:**

- ✓ Promote equitable access by maintaining the parkways' closing ratios
- ✓ Promote road sharing on parkways by informing all users on road sharing rules and by implementing existing regulations
- ✓ Promote the creation of cycling links with the network surrounding the Park to promote sustainable transportation

Online questionnaire

- ✓ The creation of cycling links with the network surrounding the Park is considered a very important strategy for respondents. The four preferred links are: Meech Lake, Old Chelsea Road, Mine Road and Philippe Lake. Between 65% and 70% of respondents feel that this is a high-priority strategy:
 - Meech Lake cycling link: 84% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 70% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Old Chelsea Road cycling link: 83% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 68% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Mine Road cycling link: 81% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 65% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Cycling link between the city and Philippe Lake: 80% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 65% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Des Fées Lake Trail and Voyageurs recreational pathway: 74% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 53% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Pink Road and Gatineau Park Pathway: 76% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 56% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - Gatineau Park Pathway and Brébeuf Park: 74% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 51% consider this a high-priority strategy

Additional comments:

- ✓ An increase in the closure ratios of pathways is a highly prioritized element among respondents (e.g., Saturday morning, later in the fall, weekday evenings).
- ✓ The upgrading or the creation of cycling links (e.g. Meech Lake, Old Chelsea Road, Mine Road, Champlain and Gatineau Parkways) is another commonly mentioned aspect.

NCC response:

Establish cycling links and increase the closure ratio of Parkways to motorized traffic:

The NCC agrees with the importance of creating cycling links. The links prioritized by respondents are mostly municipal roads. The NCC will work with these authorities to develop links as resources become available and opportunities arise. It is important to note that the construction of a cycling link on Cité des Jeunes Boulevard, between Boulevard des Hautes-Plaines and pathway 5 has already begun.

The NCC has heard the request to increase the closure ratio to motorized traffic but does not intend to act on this recommendation as it considers it has reached the maximum acceptable ratio. Each closure in favour of non-motorized activities implies that some of the recreational trails and several very popular sites (Pink Lake, King Mountain, Mackenzie King Estate and Champlain Lookout) are not accessible to users who are unable to physically access these sites by bike or on foot. The NCC believes that the Park should be accessible to the greatest possible variety of users.

Note that the pathways are already closed during half of the year (mid-October to mid-May) mainly for skiing activities. In addition, during the summer, two regular closure programs are already in place:

Alcatel-Lucent Sunday Bikedays: 30.5 km of scenic roads are closed to motorized traffic. From Victoria Day weekend in May to Labor Day weekend in September, the Champlain, Gatineau and Fortune Lake Parkways are reserved for cyclists, in-line skaters, runners and walkers from 6 am to 11 pm. The section of Gatineau Parkway located north of Meech Lake Road is well suited for families with young children. Users can enjoy two additional hours at this location as this section is closed to traffic from 6 am to 1 pm.

Saturday Short Loops: certain sections of the Gatineau Parkway are closed to motorized traffic every Saturday from late May until late October. Gatineau Parkway, between Champlain Parkway and Meech Lake Road, is closed from 7 am to 11 pm and Gatineau Parkway north of Meech Lake Road is closed from 7 am to 1 pm. Outdoor enthusiasts can practice their favourite sport over 8.2 kilometres of scenic Parkways that are available for cyclists, in-line skaters, runners and walkers alike.

AREA 3: A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND THE VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

Driving at night

GENERAL STRATEGY: ENSURE PUBLIC SAFETY AND REDUCE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH A CONSERVATION PARK

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES
PROPOSED:

- ✓ Evaluate the possibility of declaring a ban on motorized night driving on the parkway network

Additional comments:

- ✓ Better monitoring of parking areas is a factor that should be prioritized, due to theft and vandalism.

NCC response:

Theft in parking areas:

The NCC has heard the comments expressed by respondents. The organization frequently works with the police on a "Let us prevent theft" campaign. The Park has established a coordinating committee with the various police forces that have jurisdiction over the territory: the RCMP, Ville de Gatineau and MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais. The committee examines all security issues including speeding, road sharing and thefts from vehicles.

Together with police forces, the NCC will continue to promote prevention. The success of any campaign also lies in the self-discipline and accountability of users. Their commitment is essential.

AREA 3: A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND THE VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

NICHE ACTIVITIES

Rock Climbing

GENERAL STRATEGY: ENSURE A LEVEL OF PRACTICE THAT ALLOWS US TO PROTECT THE ESCARPMENT WHILE OFFERING A VARIETY OF CLIMBING ROUTES TO USERS

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES PROPOSED:

- ✓ Implement the recommendations issued by the Ecosystem Conservation Plan regarding the management of rock climbing:
 - Maintain rock climbing agreements with user groups
- ✓ Implement visitor facilities and infrastructure

Additional comments:

- ✓ Reopening or offering a greater number of rock climbing sites was mentioned by respondents.

NCC response:

The NCC has heard the request to reopen a greater number of rock climbing sites. The NCC initiated a dialogue with rock climbers once the Master Plan was adopted in 2005. The NCC currently has an agreement with the Alpine Club of Canada regarding this activity and intends on maintaining the same approach to oversee this activity. The Ecosystems Conservation Plan has already reviewed this activity and its impact on the Eardley Escarpment's ecosystem. The NCC has shown flexibility and continues to interact with users. It wishes to reiterate its commitment to preserve the Escarpment's unique environment.

At present, rock climbing in the Park can be done on five (5) rock faces with 64 climbing routes:

- Home Cliff Rock Face — Centre Wall
- Twin Ribs three rock faces — Down Under, Eastern Block and The Left Twin
- Western CWM Rock Face — West

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

Horseback Riding

GENERAL STRATEGY:

- ✓ Implement the recommendations issued by the Ecosystem Conservation Plan regarding the management of horseback riding

Additional comments:

- ✓ Allow year round access to all equestrian trails authorized by the NCC in 2010
- ✓ Demonstrate a more concrete long-term commitment with the Pontiac Equestrian Association
- ✓ Allow the sharing of equestrian trails with other users (snowshoeing and hiking enthusiasts)
- ✓ Review the Ecosystem Conservation Plan's approach (impact of horses on the environment)
- ✓ Promote equestrian activities via the Pontiac Equestrian Association's website

NCC response:

The NCC is pleased with the excellent cooperation established with the Pontiac Equestrian Association and hopes, as does the Association that this situation will continue over the long term. The NCC is prepared to explore the possibility of allowing all year access to equestrian trails as well as to allow their use for other activities such as hiking or snowshoeing. Gatineau Park's website page related to horseback riding provides a link to the Pontiac Equestrian Association's website.

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

Special Events

GENERAL STRATEGY: ENSURE THAT EVENTS ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE PARK'S AND THE REGION'S MISSION

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES PROPOSED:

- ✓ Create guidelines for the management of events. For example: site capacity, how the event relates to the mandate, duration, etc.

Online questionnaire:

- ✓ In terms of creating guidelines for the management of public events, respondents felt that priority should be given to events that have minimal environmental impact as well as to competitive events:
 - *Events that have minimal environmental impact:* 73% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 59% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Competitive events:* 72% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 52% consider this a high-priority strategy
- ✓ Events that have minimal impact on users and those that promote public participation are also considered important, although at a lower level:
 - *Events that have minimal impact on users:* 65% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 44% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Events that promote public participation:* 61% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 38% consider this a high-priority strategy
- ✓ Establishing public events that address a broad audience is considered much less important:
 - 42% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 21% consider this a high-priority strategy

NCC response :

Priority to events that have a minimal environmental impact and to competitive events:

The NCC agrees with the priority given by respondents to events that have a minimal impact on the environment. Comments on traffic issues during events were also received; these issues should be addressed. When the NCC creates guidelines for events, it will include a transportation and traffic management component.

As per the 2005 Master Plan and given the Park's mandate and mission, the NCC will promote events with a minimal impact on the natural environment and on users. The NCC believes that events that promote public participation meet the Park's objective of a *Park for all Canadians*. As for competitive events, they will also be considered if they fit with the Park's mission.

AREA 3: IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER, OPTIMIZE THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND VISITOR AND USER EXPERIENCE

FEE STRUCTURE	
<p>GENERAL STRATEGY: MAKE THE FEE STRUCTURE FOR PARK ACTIVITIES MORE FAIR BETWEEN USERS</p> <p>SPECIFIC STRATEGIES PROPOSED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify cost implementation strategies by starting with easily identifiable fee-free activities 	<p><u>Additional information:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ There were several negative comments with regards to fees applied to cross-country skiing, which is considered unfair compared to snowshoeing, which is free. ✓ Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Charge a fee for all Park activities rather than just a few to ensure a better balance and generate higher revenue for Park operations. ▪ Eliminate activity-based fees, but apply a general parking fee (with a gate) as well as a fee on motorized traffic on the parkways. ▪ Apply a general access fee to the Park and special rates for residents residing from border areas. <p><u>NCC response:</u></p> <p><i>Negative comments on the unfairness of fees applied to cross-country skiing:</i></p> <p>The NCC has heard the comments on the unfairness of fees applied to certain activities both within the framework of consultations for the Outdoor Activities Plan and in the consultations for the Sustainable Transportation Plan. Fee-based activities currently include access to the beaches, entry to the Mackenzie King Estate and cross-country skiing. Accommodation in campgrounds, cabins and yurts are also priced according to market rates.</p> <p>In the short term, the OAP aims to preserve the added value of fee-based activities. On the ground, this approach means that, for example, the scale of the ski offering will remain as it is today.</p> <p>In the medium term, the NCC will analyze how greater equity can be achieved between users by exploring new pricing models and new fee-based services. This could mean analyzing different pricing models, such as those used in provincial and national park networks.</p> <p>In the long run, the NCC will evaluate a variety of funding sources to support new services and encourage responsible outdoor practices. With this in mind, all suggestions submitted by users during these public consultations will be considered. Pricing should take into account incentives to use alternative transportation, such as a possible shuttle and/or carpooling.</p>

AREA 4: ENCOURAGE THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE REGIONAL SUPPLY OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PARK TO MEET THE GROWING NEEDS OF REGIONAL CLIENTS

SUPPLY IN SURROUNDING AREA

GENERAL STRATEGY: INCREASE THE REGIONAL SUPPLY OUTSIDE THE PARK TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LOCAL CLIENTS

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

PROPOSED:

- ✓ Promote the development of outdoor activities outside the Park (cycling and mountain biking, events, etc.) for example, by:
 - Sharing the Park's expertise in terms of management and maintenance
 - Participating in the surrounding cities' efforts to develop their outdoor activities supply
- ✓ Promoting other sites to Park users in order to practice outdoor activities

Online questionnaire

- ✓ The Cities of Ottawa and Gatineau and, to a lesser extent, the MRC and Pontiac should jointly develop mountain bike trails outside the Park area.
 - *City of Ottawa* : 70% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 58% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Ville de Gatineau* : 70% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 57% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *MRC des Collines* : 68% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 53% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Pontiac* : 64% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 50% consider this a high-priority strategy
- ✓ The same applies to the development of winter walking trails outside the Park area:
 - *City of Ottawa* : 67% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 51% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Ville de Gatineau* : 65% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 46% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *MRC des Collines* : 61% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 42% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Pontiac* : 58% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 39% consider this a high-priority strategy

NCC response:

When it comes to mountain biking and the development of winter walking trails, the NCC has heard the priorities given by the participants to different parts of the region and it will share these priorities with local authorities. As stated in the Master Plan, the NCC considers that the Park has a well-developed network of trails and only minor modifications could be done in order to protect the integrity of natural environments.

AREA 4: ENCOURAGE THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE REGIONAL SUPPLY OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PARK TO MEET THE GROWING NEEDS OF REGIONAL CLIENTS

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

GENERAL STRATEGY: CREATE ACTIVE AND POSITIVE DIALOGUES TO FIND WORKABLE SOLUTIONS

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

PROPOSED:

- ✓ Ensure proximity between Park managers and various regional organizations through communication activities and exchanges

Online questionnaire

- ✓ In terms of establishing dialogue groups with users, the network of trails (summer and winter) is the preferred topic:
 - *Network of summer trails* : 75% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 51% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Network of winter trails*: 65% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 48% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Information, communication and interpretation* : 61% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 35% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Lakes, beaches, water sports and related activities*: 59% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 33% consider this a high-priority strategy

NCC response:

Dialogue initiatives between Park managers and users:

The NCC has already implemented a communication and exchange process with winter trail users through the "Park dialogue" committee. It intends to continue this collaboration as long as the community is actively involved. The NCC has heard the priority given by respondents on the dialogue for summer trails. Other dialogue initiatives will be established taking available resources into consideration.

AREA 4: ENCOURAGE THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE REGIONAL SUPPLY OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PARK TO MEET THE GROWING NEEDS OF REGIONAL CLIENTS

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

PROPOSED:

- ✓ Promote citizen participation (e.g. volunteering, partner organization, etc.)

Online questionnaire:

- ✓ In terms of the development of volunteer programs, both trail programs are preferred by respondents: the development and maintenance of hiking trails and mountain bike trails.
 - *Development and maintenance of hiking trails:* 79% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 58% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Development and maintenance of bike trails:* 75% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 59% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Development and maintenance of rock climbing trails:* 65% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 48% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Nature and heritage interpretation:* 58% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 35% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Trail guide for beginner skiers and snowshoers:* 58% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 31% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Park ambassador for trail network:* 48% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 28% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Close or minimize unofficial trails:* 33% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 20% consider this a high-priority strategy
 - *Host for shelters/cabin:* 29% of respondents feel that this is a priority strategy and 15% consider this a high-priority strategy

Additional comments:

- ✓ The creation of volunteer programs for the development and maintenance of mountain bike trails should be implemented in partnership with local clubs.
- ✓ Developing volunteer programs to monitor trails is another potential strategy.

NCC response:

Designate the development and maintenance of hiking and mountain biking trails as a priority:

The NCC agrees with the suggested priorities for the development and maintenance programs related to hiking, mountain biking and climbing trails. This will be taken into account when developing new programs, depending on available resources.

3 NEXT STEPS

The NCC will proceed with the completion of the Outdoor Activities Plan based on the results and comments received during public consultations. The plan will be available on the NCC website following approval of the Outdoor Activities Plan by the organization's senior management committee.

The next step will consist in the establishment of an action plan.

APPENDIX A – Online Questionnaire

Public Consultation: Gatineau Park Outdoor Activity Plan

Background:

In order to assist in planning activities, the National Capital Commission (NCC) would like your opinion on setting priorities to implement some of the strategies proposed in the Gatineau Park Outdoor Activity Plan. It is important to note that any potential changes to the range of recreational services available in Gatineau Park are governed by the desire to preserve the Park's ecological integrity and subject to budgetary constraints. This survey covers a dozen themes and will take approximately ten minutes to complete. There is additional space at the end of the survey for your comments and suggestions. This survey will be available online until February 19, 2012. Remember to include your email address, so that we can forward you a copy of the consultation report and keep you informed of other consultation activities.

Focus: Awareness

The following strategies address an issue identified in the Plan- namely a lack of communication with users regarding the importance of conservation and the user behaviours that would allow them to participate in the long term sustainability of the Park. On a scale of 1 (little or no priority) to 5 (high priority), how important do you consider the following strategies? If you think the strategy is not desirable check 0.

Upgrade services at the following entrances

	0	1	2	3	4	5
South Entrance(Gatineau Parkway and Gamelin)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relais Plein Air	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visitor Centre in Chelsea	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lac Philippe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Increase the number of communication tools (information and interpretation) through better use of new technologies

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- Twitter
- Blogs
- Downloadable, self-guided, information and interpretation tools

Focus: Reassignment of services inside the Park boundaries

The following strategies address issues that have been identified in the Plan—the need to reassign outdoor activity services in the Park. On a scale of 1 (little or no priority) to 5 (high priority), how important do you consider the following strategies? If you think the strategy is not desirable, check 0.

Enhance the experience for summer trail users

- | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Enhance the hiking experience by creating circuits | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Enhance the mountain biking experience by creating circuits | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Enhance the experience for cross-country skiers

- | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Provide heated start points | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Increase the capacity of the shelters | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Provide waxing rooms | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Upgrade ski condition reports | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Provide a multi-purpose start point (waxing room, snack bar, etc.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Provide a shuttle bus service from the city to the most popular trailheads | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Develop new snowshoe trails

- | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| South of Pink Lake | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| In the Meech Valley sector | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| In the Lac Philippe sector | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

- Nature and heritage interpretation
- Park ambassador on the trail network
- Host at shelters and cabins
- Trail guides for novice skiers and snowshoers

Establish more discussion forums with users on the following topics

- | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Winter trail network (already in place) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Summer trail network | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Waterways, beaches, water sports and related activities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Information, communications and interpretation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

General Comments and Suggestions

Please use the space below to share your comments and suggestions with us.

Which profile best describes the way you use the Park?

Casual User Visits popular sites: Pink Lake, Mackenzie King Estate, Champlain Lookout, etc.
Occasional Outdoor Enthusiast Seeks safe, well-structured forms of light recreational activities: short hikes, beach outings, picnics, etc.
Outdoor Enthusiast Seeks a more intense experience and knows the Park well. Participates in non-competitive outdoor activities: hiking, cycling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, etc.
Sports Enthusiast Visits the Park on a regular basis and uses it as a training venue.

- Casual User
- Occasional Outdoor Enthusiast
- Outdoor Enthusiast
- Sports Enthusiast

How often do you visit Gatineau Park?

- 1 visit or less per season
- 1 to 4 visits per season

APPENDIX B – ADVERTISEMENT



PARC DE LA GATINEAU

Consultation publique : ateliers de travail

La Commission de la capitale nationale (CCN) vous invite à participer à une consultation publique sur **trois plans** du parc de la Gatineau **le samedi 28 janvier 2012**
Hôtel Best Western
131, rue Laurier, Gatineau

De 9 h 30 à 12 h : Atelier de travail sur le Plan des activités de plein air

Nous voulons connaître votre opinion sur les priorités pour la mise en œuvre de certaines stratégies proposées pour les activités récréatives offertes au parc de la Gatineau, dans le respect des objectifs de conservation de ses écosystèmes.

De 13 h 30 à 16 h : Atelier de travail sur le Plan des déplacements durables

Nous voulons connaître votre opinion sur les enjeux prioritaires et les solutions proposées pour améliorer les déplacements vers le Parc et à l'intérieur de ses limites.

Prière de nous aviser de votre participation **avant le 25 janvier 2012** à info@ncc-ccn.ca. Vous pouvez aussi nous faire part de vos commentaires en ligne sur notre site Web **avant le 19 février 2012**.

En ligne seulement : Le Plan du patrimoine culturel

Nous voulons connaître votre opinion sur les ressources culturelles du parc de la Gatineau. Rendez-vous sur notre site Web pour répondre au questionnaire **avant le 19 février 2012**.

Visitez le site Web de la CCN, au capitaleducapital.gc.ca, pour prendre connaissance de l'ordre du jour de la consultation publique et pour accéder aux questionnaires et aux documents liés à ces plans.

capitaleducapital.gc.ca ■ info@ncc-ccn.ca
613-239-5000 ■ 613-239-5090 (ATS)

Capitale LA RÉGION DE LA CAPITALE DU CANADA
CANADA'S CAPITAL REGION



GATINEAU PARK

Public Consultation: Workshops

The National Capital Commission (NCC) would like to invite you to participate in a public consultation regarding **three plans** for Gatineau Park:

Saturday, January 28, 2012
Best Western Hotel
131 Laurier Street, Gatineau

From 9:30 am to 12 pm: Outdoor Activities Plan Workshop

We would like to know your opinion regarding the priorities for the implementation of certain proposed strategies for outdoor recreational activities in Gatineau Park, while respecting ecosystem conservation objectives.

From 1:30 pm to 4 pm: Sustainable Transportation Plan Workshop

We would like to know your opinion on priority issues and proposed solutions to improve transit to and within the Park.

Please confirm your participation **before January 25, 2012**, at info@ncc-ccn.ca. You can also share your comments online, via our website, **before February 19, 2012**.

Online only: Cultural Heritage Plan

We would like to seek your opinion regarding Gatineau Park's cultural resources. Please visit our website to answer the questionnaire **before February 19, 2012**.

Visit the NCC's website at canadacapital.gc.ca to view the public consultation agenda, and access the questionnaires and documents related to these plans.

canadacapital.gc.ca ■ info@ncc-ccn.ca
613-239-5000 ■ 613-239-5090 (TTY)

Capitale CANADA'S CAPITAL REGION
LA RÉGION DE LA CAPITALE DU CANADA

APPENDIX C – ORGANIZATIONS MEMORANDUMS



Action vélo Outaouais
La voix des cyclistes de l'Outaouais!
<http://reseauveloboulot.ca/avo/>

18 février 2012

Objet: Plan d'activités de plein air et Plan de déplacements durables du parc de la Gatineau.

Madame, monsieur,

Nous aimerions vous faire part de notre position sur les mesures proposées dans les plans cités plus haut, plus particulièrement sur l'axe d'intervention 3 du Plan d'activités de plein air concernant le vélo de randonnée.

Action vélo Outaouais (AVO) représente des cyclistes de tous les horizons : randonneurs du dimanche, élite sportive et cyclistes utilitaires. AVO est un organisme sans but lucratif regroupant les clubs et organismes cyclistes de toute la région outaouaise, ainsi que des leaders impliqués dans le monde du cyclisme en Outaouais.

L'axe d'intervention 3 du Plan d'activités de plein air propose la « création de liens cyclables avec le réseau autour du parc » identifiés dans le Plan de déplacements durables. Nous approuvons entièrement cette proposition car nous considérons que l'ajout de tronçons permettant de relier les aménagements cyclables entre eux faciliterait l'utilisation du vélo, particulièrement chez les cyclistes peu familiers avec le réseau cyclable et les touristes. Effectivement, des indications ou des aménagements cyclables seraient souhaitables entre :

- le sentier des Voyageurs (le long de la rivière des Outaouais) et le parc de la Gatineau ainsi que le sentier du Lac des fées,
- le parc de la Gatineau et le Chemin Pink,
- le long de la rue Gamelin.

Dans le même ordre d'idées, vos propositions concernant les bandes cyclables le long du chemin de la Mine, du chemin Notch, de Old Chelsea et du Lac Meech ainsi qu'entre le milieu urbain et le lac Philippe soulèvent particulièrement notre enthousiasme. Ces bandes cyclables auraient l'avantage de permettre aux résidents de se rendre aux plages du Lac Meech et du lac Philippe de façon sécuritaire et écologique, en évitant les exigeantes montées du parc de la Gatineau. De plus, l'adoption de ce moyen de transport par un plus grand nombre permettrait aussi d'apaiser la circulation automobile et de libérer des places de stationnement.

L'axe d'intervention 3 du Plan d'activités de plein air mentionne aussi la communication des règles de partage de la route afin de faire face aux conflits entre automobilistes et cyclistes identifiés dans le Rapport de consultation publique du Plan de déplacements durables. Nous souscrivons entièrement à cette proposition qui rejoint l'objectif d'un de nos membres, Le Tour du silence. Une telle communication sur les Promenades concourrait à favoriser la sécurité des cyclistes dans le parc de la Gatineau mais aussi, par extension, dans l'ensemble du réseau routier de la région, que ce soit dans les rues commerciales ou résidentielles, en ville comme en campagne.

Finalement, nous aimerions vous suggérer d'installer davantage de stationnements pour vélos au parc de la Gatineau. Le belvédère Champlain, le lac Pink et la page O'Brien sont des exemples d'endroits où ils seraient très appréciés.

Pour terminer, nous aimerions vous témoigner toute notre reconnaissance pour mettre à la disposition des Canadiens ce magnifique parc. Celui-ci participe grandement à la qualité de vie des résidents et à l'attrait touristique de la région.

Nous vous remercions de votre attention,

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**COMMENTS ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION'S
GATINEAU PARK OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES DRAFT PLAN**

17 FEBRUARY 2012

The Ottawa Valley Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-OV) is pleased to have this opportunity to provide comments to the NCC as it develops its Gatineau Park Outdoor Activities Plan.

Recreational visitors to Gatineau Park expect a positive recreational experience in a well-preserved natural environment. The park is already very heavily used. As the population of Ottawa-Gatineau continues to increase dramatically, we can anticipate even heavier visitation and usage. Unless very carefully managed, the inevitable results will be degraded and fragmented ecosystems and a loss of visitor enjoyment.

Our general position is to support initiatives that maintain and restore Gatineau Park's natural environment and preserve and enhance its valued ecosystems while still supporting respectful recreation. We strongly support the NCC's vision for Gatineau Park, as defined in its Gatineau Park Master Plan (2005) and Gatineau Park Ecosystem Protection Plan (2010). Preservation and restoration of the park's natural environment must be the NCC's first priority. Gatineau Park must be managed first and foremost for its ecological integrity, and this will necessarily impact the practice of outdoor activities in the park.

Hiking and the Trail Network

Any expansion of the network of official trails in the park should be undertaken conservatively and with extreme caution so as to not cause ecological fragmentation or other environmental damage or increase conflicts with other users. The density of trails is already quite high in certain geographical areas, such as the heart of the park. There may be an opportunity to develop a trail in Meech Creek Valley and to perhaps formalize several existing unofficial trails on the west side of the park (for example, from trailheads on Pilon Road and Steele Line Road) and elsewhere. New trails should be respectful of the natural environment; they should be narrow, have a natural – not gravelled – surface, with stepping stones or simple wooden bridges – not culverts – only when absolutely necessary.

Several recent actions that restrict public access to the park in certain areas are dubious. For example, in the Wakefield area there will be no pedestrian access provided across the new section of Autoroute 5 when it is completed; this will discourage local tourism from the Wakefield Mill and other accommodation in the Wakefield area. Brown's Lake has been a popular destination for walkers for decades.

2

The regional offer of hiking and walking opportunities outside of the park – especially those accessible by sustainable transportation methods – should be publicized to reduce the stress on the park's trails.

Unofficial Trails

With an estimated 200 km of unofficial trails in the park, there is a need to better understand the current situation. The network of unofficial trails should be inventoried and mapped. The most popular trails should be studied and evaluated to better grasp user appeal, destinations, environmental impacts, etc. (Perhaps this has been done already?) The resultant information should then be used to determine appropriate action on a trail-by-trail basis – e.g., close the trail, ignore it, or make it an official trail. A campaign should then be initiated to raise user awareness about the potential environmental impacts of using closed trails.

Trail Maintenance Standards

Maintenance standards for Gatineau Park trails should be reviewed and updated to reflect current best practices for Class II protected areas. Many of the trail "improvements" implemented in recent years have been misguided and unfortunate. These include trail widening and levelling, smoothing out bumps, digging deep ditches, installing aluminum culverts, and gravelled the trail surface. (A prime example is trail #3.) The trail becomes a road – which kills any sense of wilderness and seriously degrades the user's experience. Gravelled roads are not only unpleasant to walk on, but can be more prone to erosion than foot-packed earth paths, especially on steep sections. (The severe erosion of trail #56 on 24 June 2011 is a prime example.) Aluminum culverts are ugly and may impede the free movement of aquatic species.

Several of the trails (notably Wolf Trail) are seriously degraded from inadequate design and over-use and now require major restoration.

Trails should be improved utilizing such practices as re-routing around wet areas to avoid trail-widening, the installation of water bars where appropriate to reduce erosion, and providing stepping stones, wooden planks or simple wooden bridges over streams.

Volunteers could be involved in trail maintenance – e.g., National Trails Day.

Mountain Biking

Many, if not most, of the conflicts between trail users in Gatineau Park occur between mountain bikers and hikers – often on trails where mountain biking is expressly not authorized. Mountain biking causes considerable environmental damage, especially on unauthorized trails – trails which are often narrow, steep and pass through wet areas. The network of mountain biking trails in Gatineau Park should not be expanded. Current regulations pertaining to respectful mountain biking, especially beyond the Camp Fortune circuit, should be better enforced.

3

The NCC should work with area municipalities and other groups to identify mountain biking opportunities outside the park.

Road Biking and the Parkway Network

Cycling on the parkway network should be encouraged and promoted to visitors as an ideal way to experience the park. The parkways should be closed to motor vehicle traffic for a longer period of time on Sundays – until at least 1 pm – to provide a safer, more positive experience for cyclists. Speed limits should be enforced to enhance cyclist safety. The parkways should be closed to motor vehicle traffic during the morning and evening rush hours to prevent their use for commuting. They should also be closed to motor vehicles at night to reduce wildlife mortality.

The width of the pavement is more than adequate for user safety. The grassy shoulders should not be paved, nor should the roadways be widened.

Cross-Country Skiing

No new parking lots should be constructed in Gatineau Park to address the shortage of parking at certain parking lots during peak ski season. The parking issue must be addressed under the Sustainable Transportation Plan.

The network of groomed trails is large and should not be increased, with one exception: With the impending closure of Boul. Gamelin, the Gatineau Parkway between Boul. Alexandre-Taché and Boul. Gamelin should be closed to traffic in the winter and groomed, like the rest of the parkway network, for skate skiing. A parking area outside the park on or near Boul. Alexandre-Taché would be necessary.

The offer for backcountry skiing should be increased, at least to former levels. Backcountry ski trails require no grooming and hence are much less expensive to offer than groomed trails. In recent years, several of the most popular backcountry ski trails in Gatineau Park have been re-identified as snowshoe trails (e.g., the former trail #16, Blanchet, from P13 to Ridge Road, and the trails from Brown Lake to Carmen Trails) or groomed ski trails (e.g., trail #6, Skyline). These trails should revert to their former designations. For trail #16, a separate snowshoe trail through the trees could be marked alongside. This can be done effectively with next to no environmental impact and no conflicts between user groups (as is done, for example, along the Corridor Aérobie in Morin-Heights).

The capacity of the current day-use shelters should not be increased. McKinstry cabin should be renovated to improve its appearance and brightness, as was done to Western cabin several years ago.

To take some of the pressure off the parkway network and Keogan cabin, skate skiers wishing a good workout for training purposes should be encouraged to use the much-underutilized “training course” at Camp Fortune. The existing building near the biathlon range could be renovated to serve as a warming hut.

4

No additional infrastructure to support cross-country skiing should be built in the park – e.g., no heated ski departure areas, no waxing rooms, no snack bars. Such developments, if deemed necessary, should be conceived, developed, owned and managed by private enterprises outside the park in the adjacent municipalities. One possible exception is at Relais Plein Air, in an area of the park already lost to urbanization. A facility could be placed in the existing parking lot, provided that the parking lot is not expanded and that no additional park land is lost to development.

Cross-country skiing opportunities outside of the park should be publicized. These include the Greenbelt, Nakkertok, and the newly protected and undiscovered areas at Mont O'Brien and Mont Sainte-Marie north of the park.

Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing should be encouraged as it does not require groomed trails and only a minimum of trail maintenance. It is an ideal activity for outdoor education and nature observation and interpretation. Expansion of snowshoe programs – for example, in conjunction with local nature groups or the Friends of Gatineau Park – could be a means of reaching some of the identified under-represented demographic groups, as it is relatively inexpensive and easy compared to some other activities.

The current offering for snowshoeing in the park is inadequate; P15 on Cross-Loop Road is often full on weekends and the trail to Healy cabin is overused. Any additional snowshoe trails should be located away from cross-country ski trails wherever practical.

Water-based Activities

We support the total phase-out of motorized boats on Meech Lake and Lac La Pêche. Meech and Kingsmere lakes must remain accessible to the public for boating and swimming.

The many and varied canoeing and kayaking opportunities outside of the park should be publicized. This includes stretches of the Ottawa, Gatineau, and Rideau rivers in the urban area, as well as the innumerable numerous rivers and lakes beyond the cities.

Rock Climbing

We support the agreement reached between the NCC and the climbing community in 2010. Climbing should not be expanded beyond the areas covered by this agreement.

Caving

Impacts on Lusk Cave and its cave-associated species should be studied. The activity should not be expanded. Educational opportunities should be considered.

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Universal Accessibility

Although data are not presented, the mobility-impaired may be a forth category of under-represented clients. Accessible activities and sites in Gatineau Park should be better publicized.

Concluding Remarks

CPAWS-OV believes that the public should continue to access Gatineau Park for the pursuit of outdoor activities compatible with a protected area. We are opposed to any further developments in Gatineau Park. No additional infrastructure to support outdoor activities/recreation should be built in the park. Roads, parking lots and other built facilities should not be expanded to meet increasing levels of visitation.

The NCC should work with the operators of other parks and protected areas in the region to encourage Gatineau Park users to explore these areas.

We look forward to working with the NCC in finalizing this plan. We remain available to meet with you to provide further information or clarifications with respect to our comments. Please feel free to contact us at (613) 232-7297 or by email (jmcdonnell@cpaws.org) to arrange a meeting.

While part of Gatineau Park, Camp Fortune is often (perhaps conveniently?) ignored or downplayed in discussions of protecting the park's ecosystems. It is a blight on the park. The downhill ski area is inconsistent with the park's ecosystem conservation objectives and incompatible with a protected area. It uses a large amount of land for ski runs, parking, and related infrastructure, and consumes significant resources for snow-making and lighting. Its footprint should not be expanded. The ski hill's infrastructure is aging. The future of Camp Fortune should be the subject of discussions with the public and area stakeholders, and a decision taken on its future, prior to the expiry of the current lease.

Overnight Accommodations

The supply of overnight accommodations in the park – campsites, yurts, and cabins – should not be increased. No “glamping” facilities should be constructed. The provision of additional accommodations by private enterprise in the local municipalities surrounding the park, such as Gatineau's Hull sector, Old Chelsea, Wakefield, and Masham, should be encouraged.

Education and Interpretation

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is a significant opportunity for improved education and interpretation in the park. Additional interpretative panels, such as were installed along the Trans Canada Trail in the several years ago, should be installed. Topics could include native fauna and flora, species at risk, stresses on the park, natural processes, and cultural sites. (The interpretative panels at Forêt LaBlanche are an excellent example.) Trail guides (pamphlets, perhaps produced in conjunction with the Friends of Gatineau Park) could be available at all major trails.

Opportunities to support visitors who are unfamiliar with the park should be explored. Perhaps a volunteer program with the Friends of Gatineau Park could offer support services for a fee. This could include a shuttle bus service for transporting small groups who wish to visit certain areas or sites. The net proceeds could be used to support conservation programs or to expand the service.

Fee Structure

The current fee structure for outdoor recreational activities is grossly inequitable – for example, back-country cross-country skiers pay \$170 per year to ski on ungroomed trails, whereas hikers and snowshoers pay \$0. Greater equity between user groups should be an immediate goal, not a medium-term strategy. The fee structure should strongly encourage use of sustainable transportation methods to access the park and favour those users who use the park on foot or by bicycle.

Enforcement of Regulations

The NCC and its conservation officers must be given the legal authority to enforce park regulations pertaining to permitted and prohibited recreational activities.

Offerings Outside of the Park

More recreational services could be developed in ecological corridors – currently being defined and hopefully soon formalized – outside of and connecting to Gatineau Park. For example, if there is a demand for longer cross-country ski trails, the trail network could be expanded to include new trails outside the park. Such trails could originate in a village outside of the park, tie into the existing trail network in the park, and terminate in a different village outside the park. Skiers would be able to avail themselves of services (e.g., restaurants, B&B accommodations) in these villages and experience the natural beauty of Gatineau Park – without having to drive to go skiing. This would encourage tourism and longer stays, boosting the economies of the local municipalities around the park. A similar approach could be taken for hiking and snowshoeing trails.

Any trail development in ecological corridors should be carefully planned and managed so as to not impede their use and function as ecological corridors.

Active partnership with area municipalities, tourist organizations and outdoor recreational groups is necessary to increase the awareness of and encourage the use of recreational opportunities and facilities outside Gatineau Park.



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Mon club, mes sorties!

15 février 2012

Objet: Plan d'activités de plein air et Plan de déplacements durables du parc de la Gatineau

Madame, monsieur,

Nous tenons à vous faire part de nos commentaires en regard des deux Plans cités ci-dessus. Nos commentaires seront bien évidemment faits dans une perspective cycliste de route. Plusieurs de nos 450 membres sont de fréquents visiteurs du parc de la Gatineau d'avril à novembre. Nous croyons que notre activité de vélo sur route est tout à fait respectueuse de l'environnement et donc en concordance avec vos objectifs.

Dans l'axe d'intervention 3 qui traite du redéploiement de l'offre dans le Parc quant au vélo de randonnée, vous proposez de maintenir les ratios de fermetures des Promenades pour les événements. Nous comprenons par cela que la CCN entend, entre autres, maintenir les fermetures du Parc les dimanches matins et la section dite 'court-circuit' le samedi matin. Nous aurions aimé que le Parc soit fermé à la circulation automobile plus souvent et plus longtemps. Nous réitérons nos demandes pour que le Parc soit fermé jusqu'à midi les dimanches, pour que la côte Fortune soit aussi fermée le samedi matin ainsi que les mardis et jeudis soirs afin de pouvoir mieux profiter de ce parcours. Il nous semble que de telles fermetures auraient un impact minimal sur les autres usagers.

Dans le même volet de l'axe 3, on mentionne la création de plusieurs liens manquants entre les réseaux municipaux (Gatineau et Chelsea) et celui du Parc. Ces liens sont identifiés plus précisément dans votre Plan des déplacements durables. Afin d'assurer un meilleur accès au réseau du Parc et un accès sécuritaire tant à nos membres qu'à la population en général, nous sommes d'avis que les liens ou bandes suivants sont particulièrement importants :

- Lien cyclable sur la rue Gamelin, surtout dans le contexte de la fermeture d'une portion de la rue Gamelin;
- Lien cyclable entre l'entrée du Parc sur le boulevard Taché et le sentier des Voyageurs, incluant la traversée du boulevard de Taché;
- Lien cyclable entre les sentiers du Lac-des-Fées et le sentier des Voyageurs;
- Lien cyclable entre le parc Brébeuf et l'entrée du Parc sur le boulevard Taché;
- Lien cyclable entre le chemin Pink et la promenade de la Gatineau;
- Lien cyclable entre la rue la Brise et la promenade de la Gatineau.

Afin de permettre à la population incluant les familles de se rendre en vélo au lac Meech en toute sécurité et sans difficulté excessive, nous proposons la complétion de l'axe cyclable Gamelin – RPA – chemin de la Mine – Centre des Visiteurs – lac Meech dans les meilleurs délais possibles. Cet axe pourrait être le début sud de la piste cyclable nommée 'Axe Grand remous-Gatineau'. Nous rappelons que le Ministère des transports du Québec a annoncé le nouveau programme Véloce¹ - un programme de financement permettant aux municipalités d'accélérer de tels travaux.

La reconnaissance du Relais plein air (RPA) comme une entrée importante au réseau des sentiers du Parc a aussi retenu notre attention. Plusieurs départs de sorties du club Vélo Plaisirs au lieu à partir du RPA. Depuis des années, nous notons que les services de base tels l'accès aux toilettes et à un abreuvoir, sont très limités et surtout très aléatoires. Dans la perspective de faire du RPA un point d'entrée important, les autorités du Parc devraient s'assurer que ces services soient aussi disponibles que ceux existants à l'entrée Gamelin. Il y a aussi un irritant concernant le stationnement P2 (RPA) puisque celui-ci est mal défini. Où est-il exactement et pourquoi y a-t-il une borne pour recevoir les paiements des gens, mais que personne n'utilise dans les faits? De plus, le stationnement contigu au RPA est souvent réservé en été pour les activités offertes aux jeunes en camp de jour, et, finalement, tous les stationnements autour du RPA sont complets lors de matchs de soccer qui demeurent difficiles à prévoir pour nos membres.

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http://www.mtg.gouv.qc.ca/portal/page/portal/ministere/ministere/programmes_aide/route_verte/programme_veloce

Plusieurs autres de nos sorties utilisent le stationnement P3 (Gamelin) comme point de départ. La fermeture de la rue Gamelin va faire augmenter la fréquentation de P2 (RPA) parce que plusieurs de nos membres doivent utiliser leur voiture pour se rendre à leur départ de sortie. De faire un détour via le boulevard des Allumettières ne plaira pas à tous. Sans vouloir prendre position dans le débat de la fermeture de ce bout de rue, nous souscrivons à la préoccupation d'accès dans un délai raisonnable aux cyclistes blessés par les services ambulanciers lors d'accidents de cyclistes. On nous a rapporté qu'il y avait eu une dizaine de demandes d'ambulance pour des cyclistes dans le Parc durant la saison 2011. C'est tout de même un élément à considérer.

Nous croyons que les mesures de stationnement payant telles que proposées sont inéquitables pour nos membres qui sont des usagers fréquents du Parc. Pourquoi devraient-ils payer les frais d'une navette qu'ils ne prendront évidemment jamais? Les navettes et/ou les autobus de la STO ne seront probablement jamais des choix possibles pour les cyclistes. D'après les documents fournis par la CCN, il y a trois périodes de pointe quant au stationnement : les plages au lac Meech les fins de semaines d'été, le coloris d'automne pour le belvédère Champlain et la saison d'hiver pour les stationnements P8, P9, P10.

Il est à noter qu'habituellement, un service de navette obligatoire/payant est associé à un service de stationnement incitatif gratuit. Le stationnement P3 (Gamelin) nous paraît trop petit pour rentabiliser un tel système et il priverait aussi les usagers fréquents tels nos membres d'un accès légitime au Parc. Pour la saison des coloris, nous suggérons un tel système avec un départ à partir du centre d'achat du Plateau lié à un paiement à l'entrée du parc pour les voitures qui veulent se rendre au belvédère Champlain. Pour les saisons d'été et d'hiver (plage et ski) nous suggérons d'offrir un service de la STO à toutes les heures tout en prévoyant des abris adéquats pour les gens qui attendront l'autobus.

Dans un autre ordre de considération, nous savons que plusieurs de nos membres sont aussi de fervents skieurs de fond, nous nous permettons de souligner l'excellent travail fait pour la gestion et l'entretien des entiers de ski. D'optimiser le RPA comme point de départ est une excellente idée et on pourrait aussi penser créer un point de départ avec des services similaires (salle de départ chauffée, salles de fartage, toilettes, etc.) dans le secteur du lac Philippe.

En terminant, nous tenons à vous réitérer toute notre appréciation pour le travail que vous faites à maintenir un endroit aussi magnifique et parfois magique qu'est le parc de la Gatineau. Dans notre cœur, il demeure notre Parc et nous l'apprécions en toute saison!

Nous vous remercions de votre attention,

Bertrand Daigneault
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