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By email

Submission by Heritage Ottawa to NCC –Draft Parkways Planning and Design Guidelines

Thank you for the opportunity to review the preliminary directions expressed in the Parkways Planning and Design Guidelines. We applaud the National Capital Commission for its efforts to update the 1984 Parkways and Driveways Policy in the shape of new planning and design guidelines, with a view to guide decisions and actions and to ensure that the parkways remain attractive, scenic and safe for the enjoyment of all users.

Overall Thoughts

As you are aware, Heritage Ottawa is the principal non-profit group in Ottawa dedicated to the appreciation and conservation of Ottawa's built and natural heritage, as well as its special places. Heritage Ottawa is also the foremost non-governmental voice for understanding and conserving built heritage and landscapes in Canada's capital.

Heritage Ottawa wishes to ensure that the vision, guiding principles and associated policies for the parkways will recognize their heritage and legacy. Furthermore, these documents/tools will also respect the corridors of places and landscapes that celebrate and interpret our Capital's unique cultural and heritage assets. We are pleased to learn that the guidelines will be tailored to the different contexts and functions of each parkway as each has its own unique iconic features and qualities.

We have reviewed the overview of the preliminary guidelines and are writing to share with you our thoughts on the importance of preserving the rich and diverse heritage features and attributes of Capital Parkways.

Can one imagine our Capital region without its network of scenic parkways? How about our Ottawa River shoreline without the linear riverfront parks and parkways? Or the Rideau Canal without the iconic Queen Elizabeth and Colonel-By Driveways that frame/brace the UNESCO World Heritage Site that is the Canal? It is virtually impossible - especially after the last few years - when so many people of all ages continue to obtain relief through the active mobility use of parkways and their corresponding greenspaces.

The parkways did not of course appear by accident. They are here thanks largely to the foresight of visionaries like Frederick Todd, Herbert Holt, and Jacques Greber, who all realized the need of parks for urban residents and the importance of the links with nature offered by parkways. The Capital Parkways system serves today as a pillar of the Capital's uniquely rich cultural and natural heritage. Looking forward, we fully recognize the increasing importance of the parkways and are hopeful that the NCC guidelines will ensure a positive effect in reinforcing that importance, today and for future generations.

Specific Observations

- While we understand the intent of the proposed planning and design guidelines, we find that the overall picture may be confusing "policy" with "guideline". The guidelines presented may be confused with policies because a guideline contains similar content. The difference between the two is that a policy is mandatory, while a guideline is voluntary, providing advice and support for policies. We therefore urge the Commission to use more definitive policy statements/language that are not worded as actions, and that support the expressed principles.
- While we understand and support in principle the proposed vision, we believe that the scenic Capital Parkways must also offer opportunities for interpretation and appreciation of heritage significance showcased via the parkways system. Parkways can offer users basic interpretation about the relationship that they share with surrounding cultural landscapes and their component elements. Parkways are the green ribbons of scenic splendor, weaving through diverse terrains, connecting and preserving heritage and culture through access and interpretation.
- The proposed "Guiding Principles" should include the conservation of the historic integrity of the parkways. In other words, applicable parkways should be branded as unique and valued landscapes.
- We strongly suggest that the draft principles also explicitly express the NCC intention to manage the parkway system through best practices (local and beyond) to maintain and enhance their heritage integrity.
- In the effort to emphasize the conservation of cultural and historical significance, we urge the Commission to oversee the process of recognizing the Queen Elizabeth Driveway and corresponding corridor at the national level through designation as a National Historic Site of

Canada, in recognition of its outstanding scenic, cultural, and historic qualities. This will ensure its continued existence, use, and promotion of its heritage value as the first and oldest segment of the Capital's beloved parkway system.

We respectfully submit that the Capital Parkways are more than roads winding through scenic waterfronts, charming urban settings, or captivating landscapes. Their "enduring" quality encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, natural or manmade, and are of such heritage significance that they educate the user and stir an appreciation for the past. The characteristic elements reflect the actions of people that may include the built and natural environments, archeological sites and other examples of human activity. We trust the NCC will continue to protect and enhance the integrity of parkway location, design, setting, feeling, and association.

Heritage Ottawa acknowledges, as no doubt does the Commission, that the Capital Parkways are assets that have a regional and, in fact, national stature and significance. As a regional treasure, their stewardship, while within the mandate of the Commission, is also a regional responsibility. It is our contention that successful planning, management and enhancement of the system of parkways relies on building on an understanding of the successes of the past. It also relies on collaborative partnerships with communities and civil organizations like Heritage Ottawa to sustain the cultural and heritage parkways legacies that enrich our lives. The protection of this vital historic, scenic, and green regional resource - as we have had it bequeathed to us - will be our legacy to future generations.

We look forward to the next draft of the Parkways Planning and Design Guidelines including an articulation of the understanding as to where value lies, and how to ensure the corresponding physical elements/attributes (character) are protected today and for future generations. We will be pleased to work with Commission staff towards a meaningful contribution to conserving and enriching the high degree of integrity of our Capital parkways.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Johnson".

President
Heritage Ottawa