



April 20, 2016

VIA Email: Catherine.mckenna@parl.gc.ca; Melanie.joly@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister McKenna and Minister Joly,

We write to you today to advocate for increased access to the Rideau Canal for canoers and kayakers in central Ottawa.

Parks Canada currently provides docks at the downtown Ottawa locks, at the Hartwell Locks (near Carleton University), and at Dow's Lake. We feel that the addition of docks between downtown and Dow's Lake would greatly increase the accessibility of the canal in the summer. It would provide more opportunities for Ottawa residents and tourists to enjoy paddling through an urban centre and to make use of this UNESCO heritage site. In addition, by facilitating the use of non-motorized watercraft, environmentally-sustainable and healthy leisure activities would be promoted.

We are interested in collaborating with Parks Canada and the National Capital Commission on a pilot project that would see two additional launching points for a summer - one on each side of the canal in the Glebe and Old Ottawa East. On the west (Glebe) side, we would recommend Patterson Creek or at Fifth Avenue (just south of the Canal Ritz restaurant). (This second location could also be useful for those wanting to visit the revitalized Lansdowne Park.) On the east (Old Ottawa East) side, we would recommend a dock at Clegg, Herridge or Hazel. There would be a floating dock in each location to facilitate safe boat launches.

After the summer, we would recommend an evaluation of the project and consideration as to whether it would be possible to establish more launching points in future years. If the increased access proves successful, Parks Canada and the NCC may wish to create permanent platforms at the access points to eliminate the cost of removing the docks and also to provide year-round resting and vantage points for the canal pathway users. Such facilities work wonderfully in front of the Ottawa Convention Centre and at Dow's Lake. We see the new access provided by the docks as a key and relatively inexpensive means of increased canal animation, a long-standing goal of Parks Canada and the NCC.

While we understand that there were docks along the canal in the past, we know that some concerns have been raised recently about restoring this access. Let us address these directly:

- There is insufficient parking. This does not seem to be a concern in the winter with those who drive to the canal in winter to go skating when there are several access points. In addition, those who are able to drive to the canal would have no trouble getting to the downtown or Hartwell Locks to park. More docks would offer increased access for those who do not drive (or who do not want to drive).
- Additional docks may interfere with navigation channels. We feel that placing the docks in the places identified above would not cause any interference with the current navigation channels.
- There could be safety issues with people crossing the Queen Elizabeth Driveway and Colonel By Drive. This would not be an issue if Patterson Creek were the launching point on the west side of the canal. For the other launching points, we believe that the pedestrian crossings at Fifth Avenue in the Glebe and Clegg Street in Old Ottawa East address these concerns.
- Launching canoes and kayaks into the canal would interfere with pedestrians and cyclists on the canal pathways. In fact, with gates that opened to the docks, it would be much faster and safer for paddlers to launch their craft. Also, the primary issue with pathway safety pertains to speeding cyclists rather than paddlers launching their boats. As we've recommended before, creating bike lanes on the parkways themselves should be done to get fast cyclists off the pathways.

Ministers, we feel that this would be a wonderful way to animate and increase accessibility to the canal in the summer months - particularly as we prepare for Canada's 150th birthday next year. It is a relatively straightforward, low-cost proposal that would bring significant benefit to local residents and to those visiting Ottawa. We would be happy to collaborate with you on making this a reality, and we look forward to hearing from you how we can work together. The previous government invested in the docks at the canal stations and now it's time to also have them elsewhere in the canal - i.e., in the heart of the capital.

Best wishes,



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cc: Mr. Jim Watson, Mayor, City of Ottawa

Mr. David Chernushenko, Councillor, Ward 17 (Capital)