



Parks Canada Parcs Canada
Chief Executive Officer Directeur général

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MEMORANDUM TO THE HONOURABLE JOHN BAIRD

**CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY PUBLICATION
ON GATINEAU PARK**

(Information Only)

SUMMARY

- The Canadian Park and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) has published a booklet, *Gatineau Park: A Threatened Treasure*, highlighting the special qualities of the park.
- The publication closes with several recommendations to the National Capital Commission (NCC) and the Government of Canada, including a request that the latter establish Gatineau Park as a national park under the *Canada National Parks Act*.
- The Government is not considering the transfer of responsibility of the Park from the NCC to the Parks Canada Agency.
- CPAWS is hosting a public event on April 21, 2008, to launch the booklet and inviting media.

Background

- In 1937, the federal government acquired 16 000 hectares of land in the Gatineau Hills (Quebec) in response to pressure from naturalists and outdoor enthusiasts to protect the area from urban development. In 1950, the plan for the National Capital recommended that the Park be enlarged to 33 000 hectares.
- Currently, Gatineau Park covers 36131 hectares and is owned and administered by the NCC under the *National Capital Act* (1985) as an important contributor to the symbolism of the Capital. Its management is guided by the Plan for Canada's Capital (1999) and the Gatineau Park Master Plan (1990).

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Conclusion

- Should the Government of Canada consider adding Gatineau Park to the system of national parks, a more comprehensive analysis of the implications of this step would be required.



Alan Latourelle

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- The booklet serves as a call to action, encouraging readers to write to the NCC and the Government of Canada to express their concerns and request the NCC take appropriate action and encourage the Government to legislate protection and national park status.
- CPAWS is hosting a public event on Monday, April 21, 2008, to launch the booklet and inviting media.

National Park Status

- Parks Canada's National Parks System Plan directs where new national parks are established. Under that plan, "Canada was divided into 39 distinct National Park Natural Regions, based on physiography (appearance of the land) and vegetation." The goal of the System Plan is to represent each natural region in the national parks system.
- From an ecological integrity perspective, Gatineau Park has some positive attributes: its relatively large size; inclusion of the headwaters of several drainage systems; relatively intact forest cover; and occurrence of most species native to this region.
- However, ecological integrity challenges include:
 - fragmentation of the area, along with proposals for new roads;
 - the density of roads surrounding the Park;
 - private property enclaves (pets and private trail networks);
 - increasing urban development and population growth in areas surrounding the Park; and,
 - growing demands by mountain bikers, snowmobile clubs and other users.
- ~~Ensuring the ecological integrity of the Park would likely result in operating costs significantly higher than those expended by the NCC. Simply transferring the operating budget for the Park from the NCC to Parks Canada would not be sufficient; additional funds would be required to deal with ecological integrity issues, developing and increasing regulatory programs, enforcement, and a more aggressive land acquisition program.~~
- Under the *Canada National Parks Act*, the support of the Government of Quebec would be required in order for Gatineau Park to become a national park of Canada.

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- In a 2005 Master Plan for Gatineau Park, the NCC indicated a desire to manage the park as an International Union for Conservation of Nature Class II protected area. Managed for ecosystem approach and for recreation, national parks are managed to these standards.
- At present, the central management principle is to offer high-quality experiences to the public while preserving the health and integrity of the park for future generations.
- According to the information that Parks Canada has collected to date, most of the land in Gatineau Park is vested in the name of the NCC, a federal Crown corporation. A significant portion—about 4000 hectares or 11 percent of the Park—is provincial Crown property administered by the NCC pursuant to a 1974 agreement with the Quebec government.
- Approximately 1200 hectares, or 3 percent of the park, is privately owned and is concentrated in the eastern section (e.g., the cottages on Meech Lake). Hunting in the Park is prohibited pursuant to a 1981 designation of the Park as a wildlife refuge by the Quebec Ministry of Natural Resources.

Considerations

- Several environmental organizations and citizens' groups have long advocated turning Gatineau Park into a national park to better preserve its ecological integrity and ensure its long-term survival as a wilderness reserve.
- Most recently, the Ottawa Valley chapter of CPAWS has published the booklet to raise public awareness regarding what CPAWS views as threats to the Park.
- The publication suggests that a "fundamental change in management strategy is urgently required to maintain the ecological integrity" of the park, and recommends "establish[ing] Gatineau Park as a national park under the National Parks Act."
- Recommendations are directed at both the Government of Canada and the NCC, with the bulk of recommendations, both strategic and operational, directed at the NCC.

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