

**THE GATINEAU PARK
PROTECTION COMMITTEE**



**LE COMITÉ POUR LA PROTECTION
DU PARC DE LA GATINEAU**

**The 2020 Gatineau Park Master Plan:
A Hodgepodge of Disjointed Objectives, or F for Failure**

**Brief Submitted to the National Capital Commission
By the Gatineau Park Protection Committee
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(Revised)**

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Summary: 2020 Gatineau Park Master Plan Gets an F

The 2020 Gatineau Park Master Plan is a resounding failure because the NCC is undermining the park's public and ecological vocations by reversing its previous policies and capitulating to private interests.

From saying in all its previous master plans that private properties harm the environment and are inconsistent with the park's mission, the NCC now sees park residents as partners, stewards and protectors of the land.

Although the 2020 draft plan is sound in several respects—1) urging the government to adopt protective legislation for the park; 2) recognizing R.P. Sparks' key role in creating the park; 3) specifying, adjusting and clarifying the park's boundaries; 4) creating wildlife corridors on the park's periphery; 5) admitting the NCC had misled the public regarding ownership of 61.5 km² of land in the lac La Pêche sector; 6) getting better visitorship figures—these positive elements don't compensate for this sell-out to private interests.

Unless reference to park residents as partners, protectors and stewards is removed, and proper focus is put on the need to continue acquiring private lands and impose a permanent building freeze, the 2020 Gatineau Park Master Plan will go down in history as the milestone that signalled the complete collapse of a conservation park worthy of the name.

Introduction

Capitulating to private interests, and violating the park's public and ecological missions, the 2020 Gatineau Park Master Plan is a confused hodgepodge of half-baked ideas, and a resounding failure.

From saying in all its previous master plans that private properties harm the environment and are inconsistent with the park's mission, the NCC now sees park residents as partners, stewards and protectors of the land.

“Stewardship of the park will continue to be a shared responsibility through the collaboration and active participation of residents,” says the draft plan on page 21. “Private landowners and commercial tenants will contribute to the collective effort to protect the park.”

The draft plan's authors seem to have forgotten that in their “collective efforts to protect the park,” residents have built 11 new houses at Meech Lake since 2006 (not to mention their constant efforts to limit public access). Moreover, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society recently denounced construction of nearly 140 houses in the park over the last 30 years.¹

What is perhaps most shocking, is how disjointed and confused the NCC's new approach to private lands is: on the one hand, it claims that the park will be managed as an IUCN Category II national park² (pages 13, 27 and 44), which stipulates that human occupation must be prevented and eliminated... On the other hand, it portrays residents as park protectors (p. 21), while encouraging them to develop their properties in an ecologically responsible manner (p. 62).

“We had to destroy the park to protect it,” seems to be the draft plan's philosophy...

IUCN Category II clearly says that human occupation is harmful to protected areas and that it must be prevented and eliminated. A Category II national park is “an area managed mainly for ecosystem conservation and recreation” ... and designated to protect the ecological integrity of ecosystems for this and future generations, by eliminating and preventing “occupation inimical to the purposes of its designation.”³

Moreover, IUCN Category II calls for ecosystems to be “not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation,” while expecting governments “to prevent or eliminate as soon as possible exploitation or occupation in the whole area (IUCN, 1990).”⁴

¹ « Une loi pour protéger le parc de la Gatineau, » *Le Droit*, 21 août 2020.

² Category II Protected Area as defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

³ “Summary and objectives of IUCN Protected Area Management Categories,” in *Guidelines for protected area management categories*. Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas with the assistance of the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland, 1994.

⁴ Quoted in Jeffrey A. McNeely and Gayl Ness, “Categories of Protected Areas: A Tool for Building a Better Relationship With Local Communities,” in *People, Parks and Biodiversity: Issues in Population-Environment Dynamics*, the World Conservation Union: <http://www.aas.org/international/ehn/biod/ness1.htm>.

In short, the NCC is sucking and blowing at the same time, by saying that residents are stewards and protectors, but that the park will nonetheless be managed as an IUCN Category II area.

Private Properties and the Damage They Do

It's worth repeating that Category II requires preventing and eliminating residential occupation, because of the harm it does...

In my view, the issue of private properties in public parks, and the damage they do, was best summed up by U.S. Parks Service Director George Hartzog in 1968, when he testified before a congressional committee. Private lands, he argued, harm national parks in three ways: 1) they destroy the environment; 2) undermine public access and the visitor experience; 3) and divert public funds from park conservation to administering improper use.⁵

Mr. Hartzog also debunked the myth that the small proportion of private properties inside national parks isn't really harmful to the environment—an argument the NCC uses all the time to sweep the issue under the rug. The NCC's latest attempt at marshalling this argument was featured recently in *Le Droit*: “Today, barely 0.7% of the park is in private hands.”⁶

The overall proportion of private lands might seem insignificant, said Hartzog, “but like the worm in the apple, these ‘inholdings’ [...] often have a devastating effect upon the natural integrity of a park.” They do this, he said, because they “tend to cluster around the prime scenic attractions of the parks, or along natural access routes, where they are seen by millions of visitors.”

Precisely as is the case at Meech Lake and Kingsmere.

There are many examples of the damage private properties do to Gatineau Park, whether in terms of habitat fragmentation, the visitor experience or the unbridled residential development inside it. Nowhere is the degradation caused by residents more evident than at Meech Lake, where outbreaks of blue-green algae have forced closure of public facilities three times—in 2007, 2009, and 2019.

These outbreaks occur because too much phosphorous is discharged into the lake, and studies have confirmed that Meech Lake residents are responsible for 66% of the phosphorous that flows into the water.⁷

⁵ Mr. Hartzog's full testimony may be consulted in George B. Hartzog, “The National Parks, 1965. An Interview Conducted by Amelia R. Fry, (the above excerpts are taken from the Appendix, p.72).

http://www.archive.org/stream/nationalparks00hartrich/nationalparks00hartrich_djvu.txt.

⁶ « Parc de la Gatineau : rectifions les faits, » *Le Droit*, 28 août 2020.

⁷ *Étude de la capacité d'accueil du lac Meech : version finale*, octobre 1989, préparée pour la Commission de la capitale nationale, Dryade ltée, p. 17.

The Meech Lake Association

By referring to residents as partners, stewards and protectors, the new plan totally ignores that the Meech Lake Association (MLA) has been pressuring the NCC to close public facilities for decades. For example, it did so in its 2003 brief on the NCC's Master Plan Review. Speciously arguing that "water testing indicates that public beaches are stressful to the lake's ecosystem," and that the "appropriateness of public beaches at Meech Lake is questionable [p. 8]," the MLA urged the NCC to close Blanchet Beach. On page 9 of the same document, the MLA says it wants the boat launch closed: "The boat launch facility near Blanchet Beach is a significant cause of excessive road traffic." The document again recommends closing Blanchet Beach and the boat launch on page 25.⁸

The same message was repeated on April 26, 2004, in a letter Meech Lake Association President Stephen Boissonneault sent to NCC Chairman Marcel Beaudry. "Blanchet Beach and the boat launch should be closed and the users redirected to an expanded facility at the O'Brien area. As a necessary complement to discourage use of Blanchet, parking lot P12 should be closed during the summer months," wrote Mr. Boissonneault.

More recently, on July 16, 2014, the MLA urged the NCC to close Blanchet Beach, when association president Chris Frank spoke with NCC official Pierre-Olivier Dorego.⁹ The alleged reasons for this: cars racing to the beach in the morning, the chatting of swimmers on the beach, loud radios, "clap claps" on the water and noise generally disturbing residents as early as sunrise. In his email, Mr. Dorego underlined that park users and the media would likely oppose this.

There's more evidence of the damage private lands do to the park: in 2013 and 2015, the Municipality of Chelsea conducted exhaustive shoreline inspections, which confirmed that 119 structures had been built without permits at Meech Lake, and that the majority of those structures, 79 of them, were on the lakebed,¹⁰ which belongs to the federal government by virtue of a 1973 land exchange with the province of Quebec.¹¹

Perhaps most egregiously and most indicative of the NCC's utter capitulation to the Meech Lake Association: in 2018-2019, the park director issued encroachment permits to 60 Meech Lake residents who had built their houses, docks, boathouses, cabins, stairs, flower beds, etc., on park property. She did this without permission from the board of directors (as required by section 12 of the National Capital Act).¹²

⁸ "Brief submitted to the National Capital Commission, Master Plan Review: Gatineau Park," Meech Lake Association, January 2003.

⁹ NCC ATIP A-2016-00068, November 16, 2016, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ "The grass still not greener at Meech: over 100 structures found without a permit," by Anastasia Philopoulos, *The Low Down to Hull and Back News*, September 9-15, 2015, pp. 1 and 13.

¹¹ See section A (2) of the August 1, 1973 "Agreement between the Government of Quebec and National Capital Commission regarding the transfer of the management and control of certain public lands in the Quebec portion of the National Capital Region."

¹² NCC Access to Information Request, A-2019-00020/LRE.

As well, in the summer of 2020, reports of the park director threatening to ban open water swimming, under pressure from residents, illustrated their ongoing state of conflict with the public.

Closure of the Booth Picnic site at Kingsmere in the late eighties provides a similar example of the NCC's servility to private interests.

So much for the theory that park residents are partners, protectors and stewards of the environment. So much for the myth that Gatineau Park is the Capital's Conservation Park.

(Appendix A provides an explanation regarding the NCC's new characterization of park residents as partners, protectors and stewards, i.e., we argue that the NCC loaded the dice against the public, by stacking its Advisory Committee on Renewing the Gatineau Park Master Plan with more than one third of members who are defenders of private property interests).

The Previous Master Plan

A comparison of the 2020 and 2005 plans on the question of private properties reveals the extent of this capitulation to park residents.

Contrary to the 2020 draft plan's disjointed and fuzzy approach to private property, the 2005 plan presented a clear picture of the problem, as well as logical and specific criteria for solving it. On page 52, the 2005 Master Plan said the following:

The presence of privately owned properties makes it difficult to control Park use, since the properties are subject to municipal by-laws authorizing the sites in question to be used for residential purposes, rather than to Park zoning regulations. The privately owned sites in the Park form part of the Capital's National Interest Land Mass (NILM), even though they are not owned by the federal government.

The 2005 plan confirmed that NCC's long-term objective was to continue acquiring all private properties, by prioritizing purchases according to the following specific criteria (p. 52):

- “a) properties of 4 or more hectares in area, located near riparian or significant habitats (e.g., bog, escarpment, wildlife habitat);
- “b) properties less than 4 hectares in area, located near riparian or significant habitats (e.g., bog, escarpment, wildlife habitat);
- “c) other properties of 4 or more hectares in area, located in conservation zones;
- “d) properties less than 4 hectares in area, located in conservation zones;
- “e) enclosed properties that fragment an ecosystem or hinder authorized recreational use;

“f) properties that hinder the development of Park facilities, attractions or visitor reception areas;

“g) properties located in residential enclaves.”

For its part, the 2020 plan says private lands will be gradually eliminated, even if it calls their owners partners, protectors and stewards. It says the NCC will do this by working with “RCMs, municipalities and property owners to ensure that the *development of these properties* [emphasis ours] respects the natural environment in which they are located (p. 62).”

This is how the draft plan says it will go about reducing and eliminating the encroachment of private properties (p. 62): it will “continue with the private property acquisition program within the park as a means of protecting the environment and naturalizing the land,” while encouraging “owners of properties that remain private to adopt best environmental practices regarding the development and use of their land and the management of their sanitation systems,” (p. 62).

Protecting the environment and encouraging more development in a conservation park are contradictory objectives.

Similarly, on the same page, the NCC says it will “encourage the municipalities to implement *design guidelines* [emphasis ours] adapted to the riparian environment and the natural habitats regarding private properties—so it can reduce the footprint while increasing it with eco-design guidelines... And instead of prohibiting construction in Gatineau Park, the NCC admits it will “encourage municipalities to adapt their bylaws to *limit the subdivision of large private properties in the park* [emphasis ours].”

The NCC doesn’t want to prohibit subdivisions in the park; it only wants to “limit” them...

Moreover, in flagrant contradiction to its description of park residents as partners, and protectors, the draft plan says that they aren’t really stewards: “use and development” of private properties “do not take into account the site’s environmental context,” which “could have a significant negative impact on the park’s integrity” (p. 15). It also says that private properties stress the environment: “The acquisition of private property in the park increases the amount of public land and reduces the pressure on the environment” (p. 62).

Finally, the draft plan says it may resort to expropriation in some cases, although it hasn’t used that mechanism to stop development in the park in a very long time. The NCC says it will “Use expropriation as a last resort, to prevent a major irreversible environmental impact (e.g. subdivisions)” (p. 62).

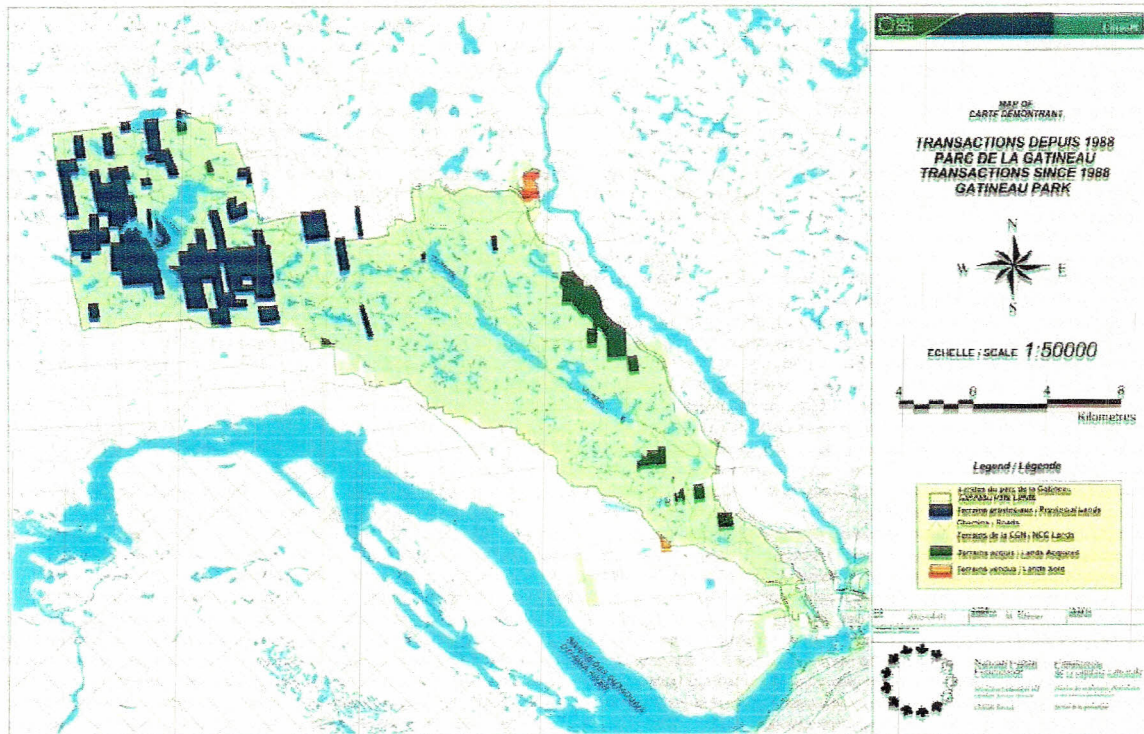
In short, while the 2005 master plan provided clear acquisition criteria, the 2020 plan skids completely off the rails by proposing a hodgepodge of completely contradictory objectives: reducing the residential footprint in the park by expanding it with more development.

What kind of twisted zero-sum game at public expense is that?

A comparison of the 2005 and 2020 master plans also highlights the NCC's failure to fulfil its commitment to ban all gas-powered motorboats in the park by 2010.¹³ Admitting its inability to stand up to Meech Lake residents, the NCC now says it will only try to discourage their use.¹⁴

NCC Comes Clean on the So-Called Quebec Lands in Gatineau Park

Although the 2020 draft Gatineau Park Master Plan is unquestionably a craven capitulation to the private interests that are doing untold harm to the park, the NCC nonetheless is finally admitting that it had previously completely misrepresented the ownership of 61.5 km² of so-called Quebec lands in the lac La Pêche sector (lands shaded in blue on the map below).



Contrast what the previous master plan and the 2020 draft plan say about this.

In 2005, the master plan claimed that “Approximately 81% of Gatineau Park is owned directly by the NCC, 17% is *owned* [emphasis ours] by the Province of Québec and is managed by the NCC under the terms of an existing agreement” (p. 75).

However, without any explanation, the 2020 draft Gatineau Park Master Plan completely changes its tune on this, now saying the NCC owns those properties: “In the early 1970s, 4,000

¹³ Gatineau Park Master Plan, National Capital Commission, 2005, p. 23.

¹⁴ Gatineau Park Master Plan (draft), National Capital Commission, 2020, pp. 52, 85, 89, 93.

hectares of Quebec Crown land were *added* [emphasis ours] to the park under an agreement with Quebec's Ministère des Ressources naturelles" (p. 13).

Those lands were the subject of the 1973 agreement with the government of Quebec, whereby management and control of lands located in Gatineau, to enable construction and development of educational institutions, were exchanged for "NCC *management and control* [emphasis ours] over other lands in the La Pêche Lake area" (p. 103).

For the longest time, NCC maps would claim that the NCC had "management and control" of the lands shaded in blue on the above map, but that the government of Quebec owned them.

In essence, the NCC was sucking and blowing at the same time, because "management and control" is ownership (so NCC maps said both the NCC and the Quebec government owned the lands... which is impossible, whatever way you cut it).

Here is what the federal government says about this:

"Administration and control" is in essence a right of ownership [emphasis ours]. Legislative jurisdiction follows "administration and control," and therefore the government, federal or provincial, administering and controlling a piece of real property would have the right to make laws about the property. This would normally carry with it the right to dispose of the lands and to keep the proceeds.¹⁵

It was only after the Gatineau Park Protection Committee intervened before the Quebec Administrative Tribunal in 2009 that the NCC began to tell the truth about this...¹⁶

Past Park Plans on Private Properties

A review of various plans, reports and policies pertaining to Gatineau Park written since the 1950s confirms that gradual removal of private properties is a recurring theme.

The genesis of all genuine park plans may be found in the efforts Roderick Percy Sparks and the Federal Woodlands Preservation League. The spirit of those efforts is evident in the following documents and policies.

The Gréber Plan

In 1950, French urban planner Jacques Gréber wrote his landmark *Plan for the National Capital*. Besides making important recommendations on the history and continued development of Ottawa as Canada's capital, it also outlined several proposals concerning Gatineau Park.

¹⁵ "Guide to the Federal Real Property Act and Federal Real Property Regulations," Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1996.

¹⁶ "Watchdog claims victory in spat over portion of Gatineau Park: Disputed land at CÉGEP belongs to province," *Ottawa Citizen*, March 22, 2009, p. A5; and « La fin d'un méli-mélo au lac La Pêche », *Le Droit*, 28 mars 2009, p. 22.

Arguing that the park should be expanded, Gréber also noted that it should be a public rather than a private preserve. As well, his plan said that the proper protection of Gatineau Park would be a

Continuous undertaking, requiring patience and painstaking effort, if there is to be offset the encroachment of undesirable selfish interests to the detriment of general betterment, [adding that] policies of maintenance and restrictions should be enforced [...] through direct ownership, or otherwise [and that there should be] more facilities and accommodation for the public in general, and less for the individual.¹⁷

The Advisory Committee on Gatineau Park

In 1952, the Gatineau Park Advisory Committee, chaired by Roderick Percy Sparks, wrote the *Report on the Master Plan for the Development of the Gatineau Park*. This Report was the first official master plan—the FDC adopted it in principle—outlining a vision for the park, and recommending the building of administrative headquarters, parkways, trails, beaches, campsites, etc.

This document provided the first comprehensive blueprint for the park; however, it also lay bare conflicting visions about the role private property should play within it. Although the majority of the Advisory Committee supported acquisition of all private property in the park, a minority dissented,¹⁸ a difference of opinion that would boil over a few years later.

The 1952 Gréber Report on Gatineau Park

Following submission of the Advisory Committee's 1952 *Report on a Master Plan*, the Federal District Commission asked Jacques Gréber to comment on various aspects of the document, including private ownership within the park.

In his report, Mr. Gréber argued that it was most desirable that enjoyment of Gatineau Park “should not be hampered by private encroachments, and that the ultimate conditions of the ideal achievement of the park is the elimination of all private property within its limits.”¹⁹ In particular, Mr. Gréber noted that Meech Lake was the nearest lake to the capital, and that it “must be gradually freed of all obstacles to a fully organized public enjoyment.”

The 1953 Gatineau Parkway Subcommittee Report

In 1953, the Advisory Committee on Gatineau Park struck a subcommittee to examine various issues pertaining to the planning and construction of parkways through Gatineau Park. Its report dedicated several pages to private property, noting that, among its members, “opinion was emphatic and unanimous that it would prove impossible to properly develop a plan of this

¹⁷ Gréber, Jacques, *Plan for the National Capital, General Report*, Ottawa, 1950, p. 248.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 22-25.

¹⁹ Gréber, Jacques, *Report on Gatineau Park*, submitted to the Federal District Commission, Paris, September 1952, pp. 5-6 (NAC, RG 34, vol. 272, File 190-G-1(1)).

character unless all privately owned land and buildings within the boundaries of the park [...] were acquired.” It also recommended that steps “be taken immediately to prevent further settlement or building development.”²⁰

R. P. Sparks’ Memorandum to the Special Joint Committee

The clash of visions over private property in the park, that had begun to emerge in the 1952 Advisory Committee Report, came to a head in the mid-fifties in an exchange of correspondence between Roderick Percy Sparks and Federal District Commission Chairman Howard Kennedy. This exchange was widely reported in Ottawa papers, and a summary of it can be found in Sparks’ 1956 *Memorandum to the Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on the Federal District Commission*.²¹

As well, Sparks’ submission urged the government to obtain all lands in the park either by direct purchase or expropriation. He also explained that certain influential people—including Major General Howard Kennedy, who owned a cottage on Kingsmere Lake—were holding up development of the park for selfish reasons.

Sparks also charged that the lack of an adequate development policy and the building of a parkway through land not yet acquired by the government had inflated property values and turned the southern edge of the park into a paradise for speculators. He concluded that the park would only be completed, and available for the enjoyment of all citizens, once the government had eliminated all private property inside it.

Subsequent Gatineau Park Master Plans and the NILM

A review of the last three Gatineau Park Master Plans and the 1989 and 2008²² task force reports on private lands confirms that the NCC has been consistent in its commitments to acquire private property, particularly in the park’s most heavily used areas around Meech and Kingsmere Lakes. Moreover, the 1988 National Interest Land Mass (NILM) designation clearly instructs the NCC to consolidate the park’s entire land mass.

The 1980 Gatineau Park Master Plan argued that private lands within the park limited the possibilities of developing it for the benefit of visitors.²³ To remedy the situation, it recommended the purchase of private properties, particularly those around Meech Lake.

In 1988, the federal government established the NILM to designate properties in the National Capital Region considered essential to the integrity, symbolism and interpretation of the

²⁰ Advisory Committee on Gatineau Park, *General Report of the Parkway Subcommittee for the Gatineau Park, Part I*, Federal District Commission, Ottawa, December 1953, p. 24.

²¹ Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on the Federal District Commission, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, No. 18, Tuesday, June 26, 1956, pp. 833-874.

²² In 2008, the NCC also issued a task force report reiterating property acquisition priorities and policies, *Vers une stratégie d’acquisition*, Commission de la capitale nationale, Ottawa, 2008, NCC ATIP A-20010/11-0001.

²³ *Gatineau Park Master Plan*, National Capital Commission, Ottawa, 1980, p. 35.

capital. NILM lands—including all private properties in Gatineau Park—are either owned by the federal government, or considered essential and earmarked for eventual acquisition.

Following in the footsteps of the 1980 Master Plan and the 1988 NILM, the NCC set up a task force in 1989 to establish criteria and a strategy to acquire private property in Gatineau Park. Identifying all private properties in the park, the Task Force drew up a list of those to be purchased on a priority basis, with specific criteria, similar to those in the 2005 master plan.²⁴

The Task Force's 1989 Report on Property Acquisitions divided all private properties in Gatineau Park into six categories (p. 4):

1. Large holdings in excess of 10 acres;
2. Waterfront holdings;
3. Parcels in existing residential clusters which affected federal facilities or interests;
4. Small landlocked parcels;
5. Small parcels on the Park periphery; and
6. Other parcels in existing residential clusters not having a direct impact on federal facilities or interests.

The Task Force Report stipulated that categories 1, 2 and 3 have relatively the same priority, and are considered of primary interest for the NCC to acquire or control (p. 5).²⁵ It is important to underline this because the NCC will say it doesn't buy waterfront properties because they don't have a top priority designation.

The 1990 Master Plan, for its part, underlined that private properties in the park created conflicts between residents and visitors and that the NCC should work towards acquiring them,²⁶ while the 2005 Master Plan noted that nearly 300 private properties remained in the park, and that their presence made controlling park use difficult. Acquiring them, said the latter, remained the NCC's long-term goal.²⁷

Although the 1980 Master Plan did not designate comprehensive categories for acquiring private property in Gatineau Park, its 1990 and 2005 successors did. The former recommended that the NCC place a high priority on properties subject to multi-unit developments, those that were environmentally sensitive, and those that were considered harmful to key park resources

²⁴ NCC ATIP A-95/96-026, pp. 55-56.

²⁵ *Acquisition Plan: Gatineau Park Private Properties*, Gatineau Park Task Force, May 1989

²⁶ *Gatineau Park: a Master Plan for the '90s and Beyond*, National Capital Commission, Ottawa, 1990, p. 29.

²⁷ *Gatineau Park Master Plan*, National Capital Commission, Ottawa, 2005, p. 52.

and assets.²⁸ As for the 2005 plan, it recommended that properties of ten or more acres and those located on the waterfront be acquired on a priority basis.²⁹

Again, in June 2008, an NCC task force drew up a list of maps outlining priority acquisitions according to the master plan, and reiterated the 1989 Task Force recommendations.³⁰

Order in Council PC 2008-1604

On September 5, 2008, the federal government adopted an Order in Council giving the NCC much greater latitude in acquiring private properties, as a result of public outcry over the Carman Road development. The wording of this instrument leaves no doubt as to the government's intentions:

Her Excellency the Governor General in Council [...] hereby approves the acquisition by the National Capital Commission of any or all privately owned real property within the 1997 boundaries of the Gatineau Park, Quebec, on terms satisfactory to the National Capital Commission.

The 2010 Gatineau Park Ecosystem Conservation Plan

If the 1990 and 2005 master plans left no doubt about gradual removal of private lands, they didn't go into detail regarding the reasons behind this, i.e., the harm they do to the environment. This is where the 2010 Ecosystem Conservation Plan filled in the blanks.

The Conservation Plan, which "fits into the National Capital Commission's planning hierarchy immediately below the Gatineau Park Master Plan,"³¹ was exhaustive in arguing that private lands harm the park and must be removed.

Below is a sample of the several statements it makes regarding private property:

P. 19: Private properties and developments, residential leases, are not consistent with the Park's mission.

P. 20: Consequences of private properties and development: direct habitat loss; alteration of species behaviour; alteration or fragmentation of species and habitats; potential impoverishment of indigenous populations and biodiversity; alteration of ecosystem structures and functions.

²⁸ *Gatineau Park: a Master Plan for the '90s and Beyond*, *ibid*, p. 9.

²⁹ *Gatineau Park Master Plan*, National Capital Commission, Ottawa, 2005, p. 52.

³⁰ *Vers une stratégie d'acquisition*, Commission de la capitale nationale, Ottawa, 2008, NCC ATIP A-20010/11-0001.

³¹ *Gatineau Park Ecosystem Conservation Plan*, Del Degan, Massé et Associés, Inc., National Capital Commission, February 2010, p.7.

P. 52: The presence of private houses impacts on the ability of shoreline areas to maintain their integrity.

P. 57: Private properties are likely to have a negative impact on the behaviour of wild species, exposing them to habitat fragmentation and loss, and does not necessarily reflect the ecological values of a conservation park.

P. 65: The presence of private properties places stress on the host environment in the form of water pollution, habitat fragmentation and the erosion of riparian habitats. The weakening of the ecosystem has allowed invasive species to colonize the area, and urban development has also increased pressure on the natural environment.

P. 80: Reducing the impact of human-induced development. A number of structures such as roads and private residences are present in the Park. Steps must be taken to reduce these impacts inside the Park, both in the field (e.g., creation of buffer zones, reduction of concrete surfaces) and in decision-making.

Appendix 3–4: Three main stressors are responsible for damage to aquatic ecosystems: invasive species; human use and recreation; development and private properties.

Appendix 3–5: Since 1991, attendance has increased to more than 500,000 visits per year (Sodem 2001), and is currently situated at 4,000 visits per km². In addition, visitor numbers tend to be concentrated at certain sites, such as Meech Lake, which currently receives nearly 39% of total visitor traffic.

Appendix 3–6: Restoration actions: reduction in the size of areas occupied by human-induced infrastructures: purchase of privately owned land; demolition of infrastructures and restoration of vegetation on demolition sites.

Given the Conservation Plan's observations regarding private lands, the NCC's claims that residents are partners, stewards and protectors dissolve into complete absurdity.

Conclusion

The history of Gatineau Park planning and management confirms that removal of private properties has always been the ultimate objective. Unfortunately, while the NCC has had mostly sound policies in this regard, it has been extremely negligent in implementing them. And now, the latest plan seeks to undo more than 70 years of efforts to build a genuinely public park by elevating the status of park residents in a disjointed slapdash attempt to legitimize their encroachment.

Unless reference to park residents as partners, protectors and steward is removed, and proper focus is put on the need to continue acquiring private lands and impose a permanent building freeze, the 2020 Gatineau Park Master Plan will go down in history as a milestone signalling the complete collapse of a conservation park worthy of the name.

Although the 2020 draft plan is sound in several respects—1) urging the government to adopt protective legislation for the park; 2) recognizing R.P. Sparks' key role in creating the park; 3) specifying, adjusting and clarifying the park's boundaries; 4) creating wildlife corridors on the park's periphery; 5) admitting the NCC had misled the public regarding ownership of 61.5 km² of land in the lac La Pêche sector; 6) getting better visitorship figures—these positive elements don't compensate for this sell-out to private interests.

Accordingly, the Gatineau Park Protection Committee gives the draft plan an F for failure.

The Park Founder Gets the Final Word

Percy Sparks's final public statement on Gatineau Park underlines the undue influence of private property owners on park management, and how little has changed in over 60 years:

The public interest has been largely overlooked in respect to the land policy and in policies generally, of the [...] Commission, in planning Gatineau Park. I suggest that personal, financial and political interests of land owners in the area exercise undue influence in the making of policy in respect to this great project. I am hopeful that as a result of giving publicity to these facts, the [...] Commission will reconsider their present policies and in future regard the public interest as their only guide.³²

We know Mr. Sparks would agree with the following words from former U.S. Parks Service Director Newton B. Drury, whom he quoted to good effect in his writings:

The solution of these and all in-holdings rests chiefly with the realization that the national parks, monuments and historical areas are vital economic and social assets to the nation, and that the government holdings within their boundaries should be unified and complete.³³

³² Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on the Federal District Commission, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, No. 18, Tuesday, June 26, 1956, p. 873.

³³ Newton B. Drury, "Private Lands in National Parks," *National Parks Magazine*, April-June 1947.

Appendix A: The Public Advisory Committee: Serious Conflicts of Interest

In my view, the hijacking of park planning and management is a direct result of the NCC's weak leadership and stacking of its Public Advisory Committee on Renewing the Master Plan with park residents. Over one third of members are landowners or their apologists—very serious conflicts of interest whatever anyone says to the contrary.

Here are the names of those residents:

- 1) Katharine Fletcher: owner of approximately 50 acres inside Gatineau Park, 4316 Steel Road, Pontiac (in 2018, the Municipality of Pontiac amended its bylaws to allow construction inside Gatineau Park);
- 2) Joanne Hamilton: owner of the house at 692 Meech Lake Road, half of which is built on the lakebed (park/NCC property...);
- 3) Gershon Rother: former NCC employee and Kingsmere resident (inside Gatineau Park);
- 4) Tom Young: Kingsmere resident (inside Gatineau Park);

Their apologists:

- 5) Stephen Woodley: in 2006, as president of ACRE Chelsea, he opposed bills tabled by Senator Spivak and Ottawa MP Ed Broadbent on the grounds they placed too much emphasis on removing private property from the park. This is what ACRE wrote:

“Current private member bills before the Senate and House of Commons were tabled with the best of intentions but we believe that they focus too strongly on removing private landowners from the park without adequate consideration of the primary goal of maintaining and restoring the park's ecological integrity.”³⁴

- 6) Benoit Delage, executive director of the Conseil régional de l'environnement et du développement durable de l'Outaouais (CREDDO): on September 5, 2018, as a member of Chelsea's Planning and Sustainable Development Advisory Committee, he seconded and voted for a motion granting permission to a Meech Lake resident to build a two-storey house in the riparian buffer strip.³⁵

For a detailed history of the relationship between the FDC/NCC and the Kingsmere and Meech Lake residents' associations, see Michael Lait's PhD thesis: *The Rotting Heart of Gatineau Park*, Carleton University, Department of Sociology, 2017.

³⁴ “Recommendations to the NCC Mandate Review Panel,” ACRE Chelsea, November 14, 2006,

http://acrechelsea.qc.ca/eng/nccMandate_7.html.

³⁵ « Le CREDDO mine le parc, » *Le Droit*, 14 janvier 2020.

Appendix B: Partial List of Private Properties the NCC did not Acquire in Key Park Sectors Since 2010

The NCC has not only failed to stop residential construction in Gatineau Park—nearly 140 new houses over the last 30 years—it has also failed to acquire over a dozen properties in key park sectors that were for sale over the last decade, although it has \$40 million in its acquisition fund every year.

Below is only a sample of the properties that the NCC failed to acquire in the most heavily visited sector of the park over the last ten years: Meech and Kingsmere. All of them have been designated as top priorities for acquisition by two NCC task forces. Included are a few of the properties the NCC purchased, to highlight its overall timidity in this regard.

The NCC has also failed to acquire several properties in the Skyridge sector (environmentally very sensitive given its proximity to Pink Lake).

- 1) 27 Lacharité Road: \$1,100,000, 2010 (built on a vacant lot in 2006; could have been purchased for far less);
- 2) 723 Meech Lake Road: \$885,000, 2010 (built in 1995—NCC should not have allowed: purchasing it now is far more expensive than purchasing vacant lot 15 years ago);
- 3) 872 Meech Lake Road: \$950,000, 2010 (also built recently: vacant lot could have been purchased for far less. Sold for \$850,000);
- 4) 231 Kingsmere Road: \$889,000, 2010;
- 5) 84 Kingsmere Road: \$374,000, 2010;
- 6) 755 Meech Lake Road, \$1,290,000, 2010;
- 7) 817 Meech Lake Road, \$1,290,000, 2010, (built in 1999);
- 8) 905 Meech Lake Road: empty lot 1.25 acres: \$799,000, 2010 (was \$125,000 in 1996) (NCC bought this one);
- 9) 23 Lacharité, \$525,000, 820 sq. ft. July 10, 2014;
- 10) 258 Kingsmere Road, 1,674 square feet, \$610,000: 4.42 acres, 2014 (NCC bought this one);
- 11) 93 Kingsmere Road, \$525,000: July 2014. (NCC bought this one);
- 12) 669 Meech Lake Road, \$720,000: built in 1960, July 2014;

- 13) 19 Highland Road, Kingsmere, July 2014; \$625,000;
- 14) 140 Basswood, (Skyridge), Nov. 11. 2016, \$595,000;
- 15) 829, Chemin du Lac-Meech, Chelsea, \$1,998,888: September 7, 2020;
- 16) 689, Chemin du Lac-Meech, Chelsea, \$1,550,000: September 7, 2020.
- 17) 1098, chemin de la Montagne, Gatineau, \$399,000 : September 14, 2020;
- 18) 1204, chemin de la Montragne, Gatineau, 3 acres, \$598,000, September 14, 2020.

Appendix C: Criteria for Park Legislation

The Gatineau Park Protection Committee views with a great deal of scepticism the 2020 master plan's commitment to seeking protective legislation. In 2005, the master plan said the NCC would "take the necessary steps to identify the potential options to enhance its authority over all the aspects of the Park (...) in a way that will provide for the long-term protection and integrity of the Park's boundary and ecosystems" (p. 75).

In 2006, the NCC issued a report, *Legal Protection of Gatineau Park: Is legislation necessary?* The document said that maintaining the status quo in terms of legislation was not an option:

As for Gatineau Park, the analysis of issues affecting the park that preceded the approval of the 2005 Master Plan demonstrated that keeping to the status quo in terms of park management would involve some serious risks. Urban growth in the areas encircling the park poses risks of habitat loss, interruption of natural processes and the isolation of ecosystems. The great popularity of the park among residents of the National Capital Region and tourists risks decreasing the quality of recreational activity, increasing automobile traffic (p. 15).

Unfortunately, although the NCC underlined that the status quo involved serious risks, it did absolutely no follow-up on this, and the park still lacks comprehensive legal protection.

According to the Gatineau Park Protection Committee, protective legislation should include the following elements.

1) Provide legislated boundaries for Gatineau Park. At present, the park's boundaries have no transparent legislative framework and can be changed behind closed doors. This happened most notably in 1997, when the NCC removed some eight square kilometres of land from the park through boundary rationalization.

2) Prevent removal of any land from Gatineau Park by Order in Council or other administrative means. Only an Act of Parliament should be able to remove properties from the park. This is in the spirit of the protection that has been given to our national parks since passage of the 1930 National Parks Act.

3) Create a mechanism for expanding the park should the government choose to do so. Any expansion would require cooperation between the federal government and the Province of Quebec, public consultations and the concurrence of Parliament. Committees from both houses of Parliament would have 30 sitting days to examine the proposal, and it would proceed only with consent from both houses.

4) Recognize that much of Gatineau Park remains in private hands and that one of the duties of the National Capital Commission is to gradually acquire it. Legislation should provide

the NCC with a right of first refusal on all property sales in the park, as well as a prohibition on all residential construction in the park.

5) Dedicate the park to future generations and ensure conservation is the first priority of park management.