



**JUN 18 2021**

Ms. Kelly Block, M.P.  
Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Block:

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (the Committee) for its report, Report 2, Conserving Federal Heritage Properties, of the 2018 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, which was tabled in the House of Commons on February 18, 2021. I thank you for your interest and recommendations. Please accept this letter as the Government's response to your report.

As the Committee notes, heritage buildings and national historic sites under the care of the Government of Canada are an important part of our collective heritage. Parks Canada protects the commemorative integrity of the national historic sites that it administers and supports the protection of federal heritage buildings and national historic sites under the administration of other federal departments. Parks Canada shares the concerns of the Committee and the Auditor General regarding the need to better protect federal historic places.

This Government is committed to protecting and conserving historic places, inclusively, transparently and sustainably. I am very pleased to note that Budget 2021 proposed \$28.7 million over five years and \$5.8 million ongoing "to implement new legislation that, if enacted, would provide for a transparent designation framework as well as the sustainable protection of the over 300 federally-owned historic places."

To address the concerns raised by the Auditor General in 2018, Parks Canada has extensively engaged other federal custodians and implemented important administrative performance improvements that will strengthen the protection of federally-owned historic places for present and future generations. Progress reports on detailed action plans developed by Parks Canada, DND and DFO to respond to the Auditor General's recommendations are available in the "Departmental Action Plans and Progress Reports" webpage of the Standing committee on Public Accounts section of the House of Commons website.

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Regarding the Committee's Recommendation 1, on asset data management, improvements achieved ensure that national asset management databases for Parks Canada, DND and DFO contain complete and accurate information on the condition of their respective heritage properties. Parks Canada completed the monitoring of heritage information quality in its asset information management system. Additional minor improvements have been identified that can further enhance information quality, and these are being implemented.

DND completed all outstanding condition assessments, and uploaded condition assessments for each of its heritage assets in its real property portfolio to its asset management system. DFO has made improvements to its asset management system to properly distinguish between federal heritage buildings designated through the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office and heritage lighthouses designated under the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act, and accurately capture heritage designation data for all heritage properties.

Regarding the Committee's Recommendation 2, on an approach to designate and conserve heritage properties, Parks Canada led an assessment of the heritage evaluation and designation process for Classified and Recognized federal heritage buildings (Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office). New evaluation criteria and designation process have been developed in collaboration with federal custodians, and Parks Canada's Indigenous advisory council on cultural heritage provided comments on a draft of the draft criteria. Validation through testing and approval are being completed in spring and summer 2021.

Once improvements to evaluation criteria and the designation process for federal heritage buildings have been adopted, Parks Canada will continue to collaborate with federal custodians, Indigenous partners and heritage stakeholders to identify and implement changes to better conserve federal historic places, including the rehabilitation and reuse of heritage buildings in a green and accessible manner. Engagement on this important subject is underway.

Regarding the Committee's Recommendation 3, on providing accurate information to Parliament and Canadians, Parks Canada completed a review of all federal heritage designations and reconciled its two primary databases: the Directory of Federal Heritage Designations (DFHD) and the Canadian Register of Historic Places (CRHP). Information gaps have been identified and are being addressed (for example, providing reliable photographs of historic places) and procedures have been clarified for updating information when changes occur (for example, when new designations are made). Additionally, improved data in Parks Canada's central asset management system will inform its annual reports

to Treasury Board Secretariat on the condition of its assets and its five-year reports tabled in Parliament, known as the State of Canada's Natural and Cultural Heritage Places reports. Finally, Parks Canada consulted federal custodians to confirm their heritage assets and the public registries have been updated accordingly. A data validation exercise will be undertaken annually as part of improved database maintenance procedures.

During the 2020 Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada, Canadians called for greater legal protection for historic places under the care of the Government of Canada. In dialogue with heritage partners, stakeholders, and Indigenous partners across Canada, Parks Canada has been exploring how strengthening legislation could build on what Parks Canada and key custodians have achieved to better identify and conserve federal heritage, inclusively, transparently and sustainably.

I would like to thank the Committee members for your excellent work and more specifically, for your concern for the conservation and protection of historic places under the care of the Government of Canada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Wilkinson', is written in a cursive style.

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C., M.P.