



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION NO.: **421-03249**

BY: **MR. STETSKI (KOOTENAY-COLUMBIA)**

DATE: **FEBRUARY 21, 2019**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **ANDY FILLMORE**

Response by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

National Capital Commission

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government would like to thank the petitioners for expressing their attachment to Gatineau Park and its preservation for future generations.

Gatineau Park is the National Capital Region's largest and most popular green space. The Park's varied ecosystems are rich in biodiversity, providing a habitat for over 4,000 species, including rare species found nowhere else in the region, and over 150 species at risk.

In addition, the Park has a key role to play in the promotion and discovery of our environment. On July 1, 2018, Gatineau Park will be eighty years old. Over those eight decades, Gatineau Park has grown while continuously being used by visitors (both Capital residents and tourists) for outdoor leisure activities. It is a favourite year-round destination for nature-based day trips, involving numerous outdoor recreational activities, including hiking and rambling, nature observation and cross-country skiing. Each year, over 600,000 people make more than 2.65 million visits to Gatineau Park.

Legislation, while useful, is not the only tool available to the government to secure, conserve and enhance the natural environment of the Park, as well as to maintain an array of recreational, interpretation, and contemplative activities that are respectful of the natural environment.

Gatineau Park has clear and well-defined geographical boundaries recognized by local governments, police and emergency services, community and environmental groups, residents and visitors. These boundaries were formally established by the Board of Directors of the NCC in 1997, confirmed in 1998, and reaffirmed in an Order in Council in 2008 (P.C. 2008-1604, on September 5, 2008). They are permanent and they are the basis upon which the NCC manages the Park.

The NCC has developed a Gatineau Park Master Plan that guides the management of the Park. The central management principle of the Master Plan is to preserve the health and integrity of the Park for future generations while offering environmentally respectful experiences to Canadians. In other words, the Master Plan establishes a vision of the Park as a protected natural area, managed primarily to conserve its ecosystems. Only secondarily is it a place of recreation, and even then one where natural processes are allowed to take precedence and where the restoration of the natural heritage is encouraged. Gatineau Park is the Capital's Conservation Park.

To achieve these goals, the NCC uses zoning to concentrate recreational activities in the more highly developed sectors of the Park, and identifies specific actions aimed at protecting and enhancing the ecological integrity of the Park's natural resources. Moreover, the NCC has a policy of acquiring private property in the Park whenever possible. Gatineau Park has an area of 36,100 hectares. In 2008, 600 hectares were under private ownership. Since then, as part of its conservation mandate, the NCC has acquired 36 percent of those lands. There are now only 386 hectares of private property in the Park. The NCC continues to actively pursue acquisition of private properties, with a view to further consolidating the Park under NCC ownership. No part of the Park's territory can be removed or sold without government approval.

The results of this emphasis on conservation have been positive. The *2016-17 Report on Gatineau Park Ecosystems* found that the overall condition of the Park is "good", and that this condition remains stable.

To build on the successes achieved, the NCC is currently renewing the Gatineau Park Master Plan. Involving broad consultations with the public, local municipalities, the conservation community, user groups, and other stakeholder groups, the review process provides an opportunity to take the Gatineau Park Master Plan forward into the twenty-first century.