

# FRIENDS OF THE RIDEAU

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Honourable Catherine McKenna  
Minister of the Environment and Climate Change  
Minister responsible for Parks Canada  
Parliament Buildings  
Ottawa

November 9, 2015

Dear Minister McKenna,

Congratulations on your election victory and on your appointment as Minister of the Environment, responsible for Parks Canada. Friends of the Rideau is a not-for-profit, volunteer-run organization working in cooperation with Parks Canada to promote awareness of the Rideau Canal's heritage and place in Canada's history, and to enhance visitor understanding and enjoyment of the canal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We recognize that you entered the Cabinet with a large, complex and important set of issues confronting you. We hope that before long you will be able to engage with what we see as pressing issues regarding Parks Canada's responsibilities for Canada's cultural and natural heritage. Friends of the Rideau shares the concerns of many volunteer organizations and a large segment of the general public that Parks Canada has lost sight of its primary mandate as the custodian of the country's national historic sites and national parks. Simply put, Parks Canada has been subject to such major budget cuts in recent years that the organization has been left significantly constrained in its capacity to fulfil its heritage protection, preservation and presentation mandates.

Over the last decade too much attention has been given to meeting the direct costs of heritage sites and national parks. Revenue generation has replaced cultural and natural presentation as Parks Canada's primary focus on the Rideau Canal. Heritage presentation and preservation, core mandates of Parks Canada, are no longer being done on much of the canal. We have observed that a consequence has been that many visitors are surprised to learn the Rideau Canal is a working example of early 19<sup>th</sup> century technology and a significant part of Canada's history. In fact the Rideau is the oldest continuously operating canal in North America and we have a responsibility to Canadians to preserve and protect it. Indeed, Canada made a commitment to UNESCO, in proposing the Rideau Canal as a World Heritage Site in 2007, to do just that.

Friends of the Rideau wishes you every success as Canada's Minister of the Environment. During your tenure we look forward to strengthening and deepening our cooperation with a renewed Parks Canada, and we look forward also to welcoming you to the Rideau in both your official and personal capacity. After all, the Rideau Canal is at your doorstep.

With warmest regards,

Hunter McGill  
Chairman