



Site visit and public consultation: Bronson Pulp Mill ruins public access and Richmond Landing shoreline access

Consultation Report

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I – Project description

Objectives

The objectives of the Bronson Pulp Mill ruins public access and Richmond Landing shoreline access projects are to enhance public experience of the shorelines and the islands through the following:

- Providing public access from the Ottawa shoreline for pedestrians and cyclists. Bridges could connect Richmond Landing, Victoria Island and Amelia Island.
- Providing universally accessible (UA) routes from the Portage/Wellington intersection to Richmond Landing, and from the Bronson Pulp Mill for people to experience the ruins.
- Developing (Aboriginal, natural, industrial and military heritage) interpretation, as well as lookouts and wayfinding.

Context

This project is aligned with the National Capital Commission's (NCC) desire to provide greater access to the river and shorelines, while enhancing the visitor experience, accessibility and visibility of this core downtown sector.

II – Consultation process

Overview

Consultation objective

To gather feedback on the proposed projects, and engage stakeholders and the public on ways to improve access to the site and the visitor experience.

Date and location

Public consultation/workshop and site visit: On October 7, 2014, the public consultation/workshop took place at the Mill Street Brew Pub, 555 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario, from 4:30 pm to 8 pm, with site visits departing from the pub, from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm.

Meetings with stakeholders: Meetings were held, as per stakeholder availability, in September and October.

Online consultation: A questionnaire was available on the NCC's website, from October 8 to 24, 2014.

Consultation process and materials

Public consultation/workshop: Members of the public were invited to view a series of panels describing the projects and speak with the project team. Following the site visit, participants worked in groups of eight to discuss their ideas for the sites.

Site visit: One group of French participants and two groups of English participants went on a site visit with the NCC Project Leader and project managers. This allowed members of the public to see first-hand the accessibility challenges and site opportunities.

Invitations and promotion

- Email invitation to the Public Affairs database
- Media invitation
- Website calendar event
- Facebook ads and messages
- Twitter messages
- Advertisements (*Ottawa Citizen*, *Le Droit*, EMC, *La Revue*).

Participants

101 public consultation participants

- Members of the public
- Interest groups (Société d'histoire de l'Outaouais, Gloucester Historical Society, Heritage Ottawa, Conseil régional de l'environnement et du développement durable, Ottawa River Runners)
- Community associations (Association des résidents de l'île de Hull, Westboro Beach Community Association)
- Other stakeholders: City of Ottawa, Navy League of Canada, Au feel de l'eau.

Stakeholder engagement

Project managers also met with the following stakeholders individually to introduce and discuss the projects in order to solicit their feedback with regard to possible impacts on their interests or operations.

- Government partners: federal (Public Works and Government Services Canada), provincial (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry), municipal (City of Ottawa)
- Ottawa River Runners
- Ottawa-Gatineau Geoheritage Project
- Royal Canadian Navy
- The Navy League of Canada
- Au feel de l'eau
- Energy Ottawa
- Mill Street Brew Pub.

Questionnaire

In addition, 15 respondents completed the online questionnaire, and 18 questionnaires were completed by participants at the workshop. Two emails were received from members of the public.

III – Consultation highlights

Stakeholders and participants in the public and online consultations indicated the following:

- The area should offer a large number of services and a variety of infrastructure, such as benches, restaurants, quays for non-motorized boats, public washrooms and bicycle parking.
- Natural areas should be protected: pathways should remain in a natural state and indigenous plants should be used for landscaping; parking on Victoria Island should be limited, and the American eel should be protected.
- The area should highlight the history of the region through an interpretation centre and interpretation panels on the pathways, which should focus on the contribution of those who were most involved in the development of this site.
- Existing infrastructure should be utilized.
- If the bridge at the Bronson Pulp Mill is to be rebuilt, its design should be similar to the surrounding architecture.
- Access to scenic viewpoints from the site should be maintained, and public art should be incorporated into the area.
- Work should be undertaken in collaboration with First Nations; their values should be taken into consideration and, for the interpretive theme, there should be an emphasis on the current situation.
- All visitors should be able to read the interpretation panels (in English, French, Algonquin and Braille).
- Ensure safety on bicycle pathways (by installing nighttime lighting, clearing the pathways in winter, and ensuring separation of cyclists and pedestrians).

IV – Public comments

Workshop feedback

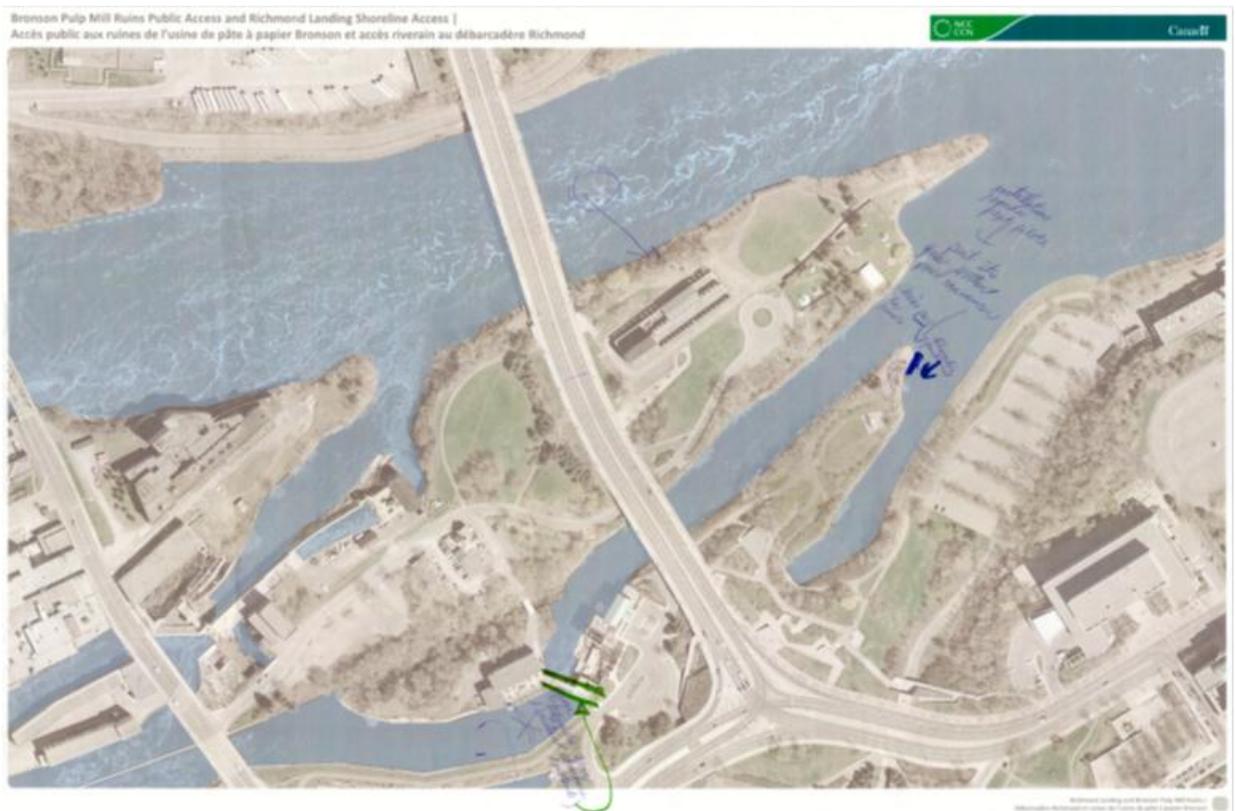
Participants at the nine tables described their ideas for the area and drew their own designs.

Table 1



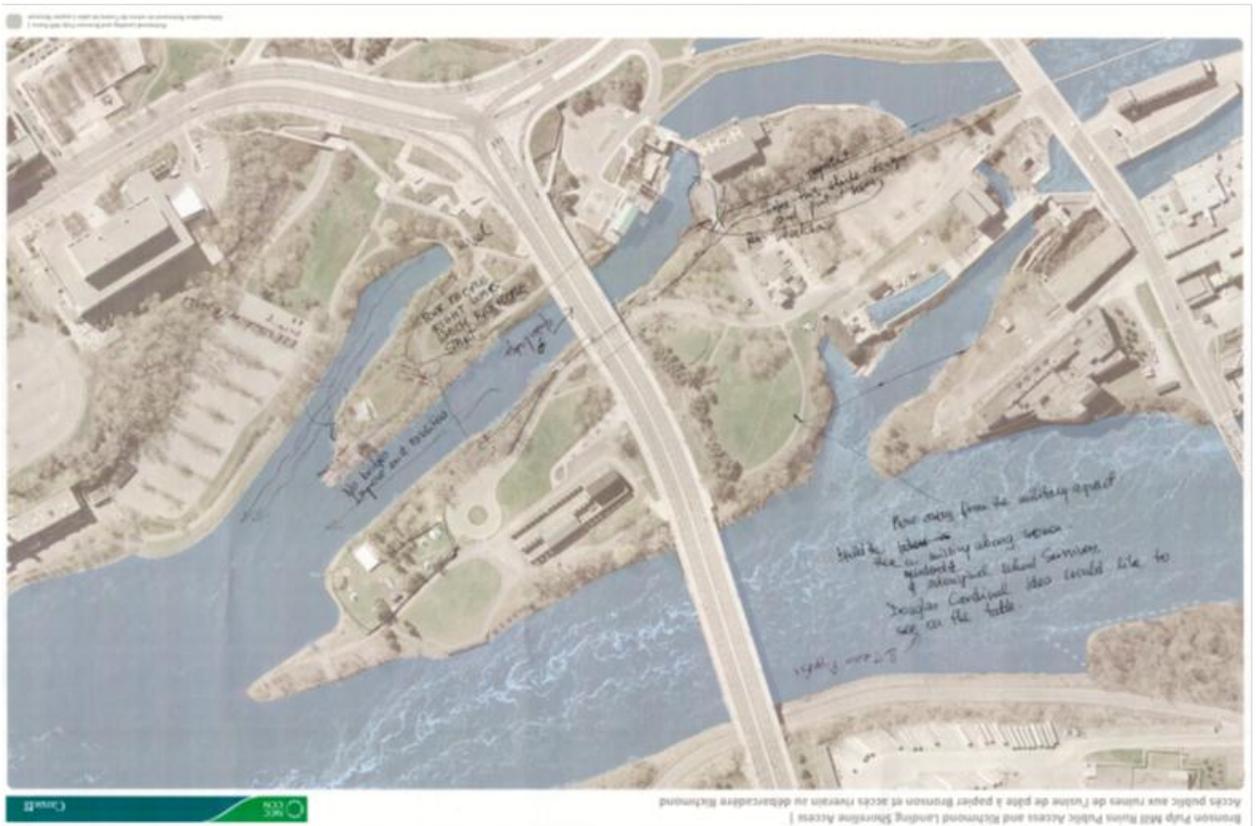
- Pathways should be natural.
- Participants agreed with the proposed crossing points.
- Suggestions included cafés, benches, a kayak launching/landing point.
- Minimize parking on Victoria Island.
- Participants agreed with interpretation themes, and suggested the creation of an interpretive centre on local history.

Table 2



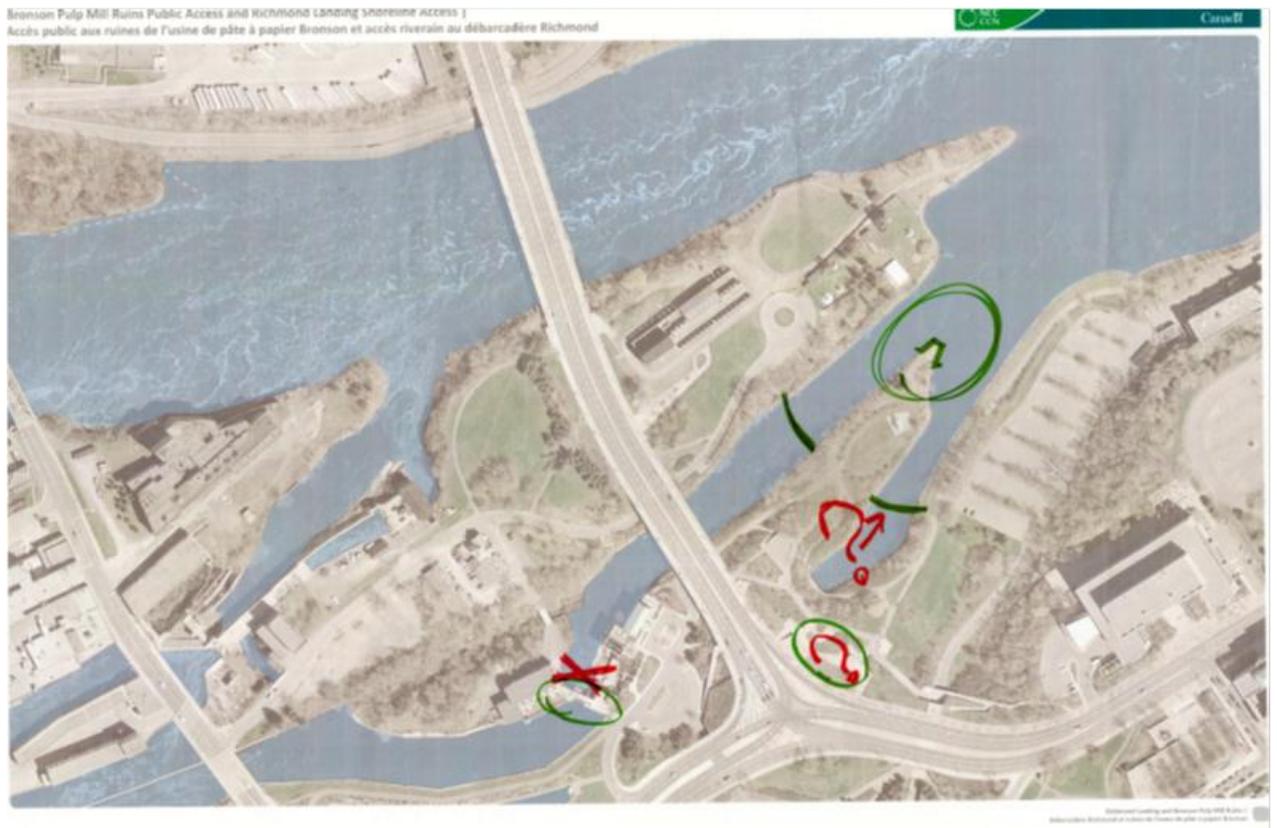
- The first priority should be universal accessibility, on the land and on water.
- The American eel should be protected.
- Existing structures should be used as much as possible.
- Bridge design should be similar to architecture found in the area.

Table 3



- Install benches and interpretive panels along the new pathways.
- Use indigenous plants for landscaping.
- Preserve the views, and use existing infrastructure.
- Involve Douglas Cardinal.
- Have peace and reconciliation as an interpretive theme.

Table 4



- Ensure French, English and Algonquin are used for signage, and that other languages are available online for interpretation.
- Use Braille.
- Think of exploring interaction through smells and other senses.
- Bridge design should reflect First Nations heritage and culture.
- Benches and bike parking should be provided.

Table 5



- Add services, such as public washrooms and boat access.
- Think of lighting, while protecting the night sky.
- Make the pathways interesting by emphasizing their scenic nature.
- Clear the pathways in the winter, and encourage skiing/snowshoeing.
- Provide UA parking nearby.

Table 6



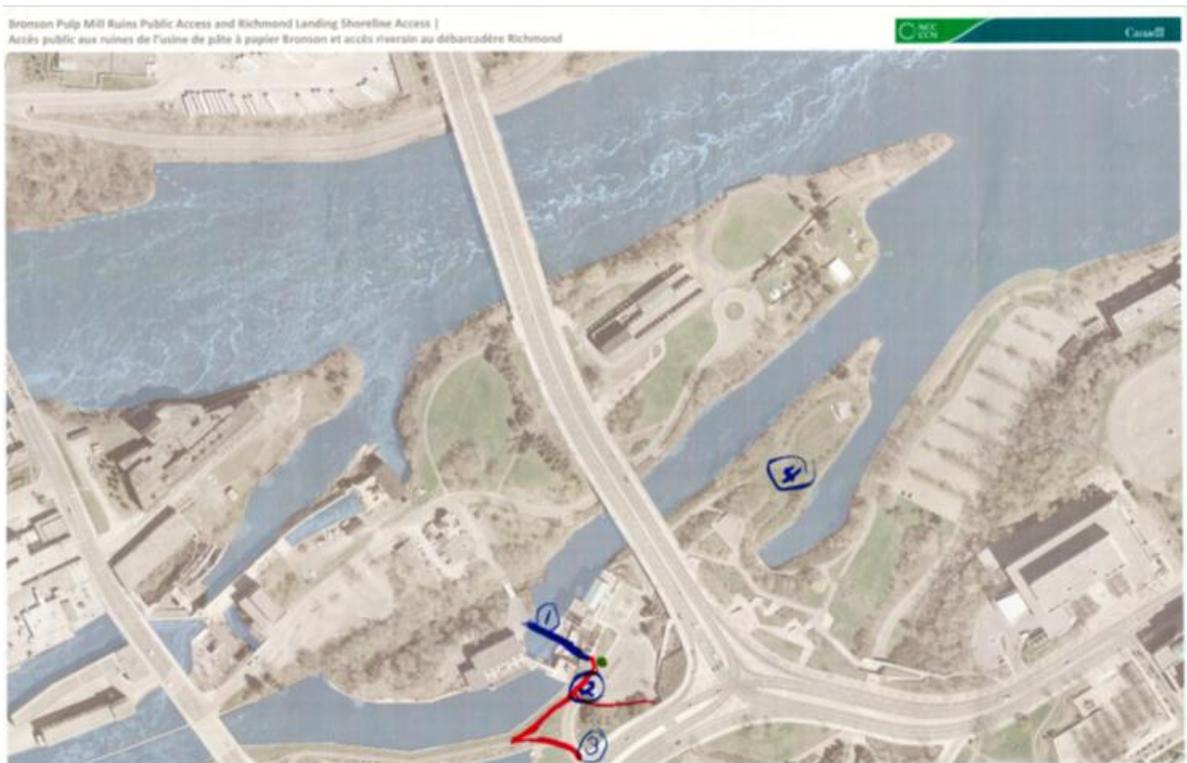
- Cyclists and pedestrians should be separated on the pathways.
- The crossing point from the Ottawa shoreline to Richmond Landing should be the priority, along with the ceremonial landing.
- Ensure privacy is maintained for the sweat lodge on Victoria Island.
- For the Aboriginal interpretive theme, there should be an emphasis on the current situation.

Table 7

No drawing was provided.

- Use existing structures and crossings to limit the expenditure of funds.
- Ensure pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- The zigzag design of the pathway below the bridge could be improved.
- A functional boat landing is very important.

Table 8



- The bridges provide opportunities to create new views.
- It is important to keep the shorelines as natural as possible.
- When planning for parking needs, reconcile the uses for the restaurant; look at bike routes and bus service.
- Participants agreed with the four interpretive themes (Aboriginal, natural, industrial and military).
- Think of security when designing lighting for the area.
- Have space for public art.
- Share parking with the restaurant.

Table 9

No drawing was provided.

- For the Chaudières Dam, it is important to note that it was one of the first hydro dams in Canada. Some indicated that it should be removed; others, that it should be preserved.
- Safety should be improved for cyclists and pedestrians on Richmond Landing.
- Look at what was done elsewhere for the eel ladder.
- Commemorate important people who contributed to the area.

Questionnaire feedback

Consultation participants completed a questionnaire in person or online. Here are the main comments provided, in order of popularity.

We asked participants **what they thought of the proposed improvements**.

For the pathways, they indicated the following:

- They welcomed the improved access to the site.
- They were very positive regarding the proposed pathways.
- A key priority is to ensure universal accessibility to the site, parking (including appropriate surfaces), and various means to interact with the site.
- Improve safety through separate pedestrian and cyclist pathways; others suggested a multi-use pathway.
- Lighting should be designed in a sensitive manner.
- The pathways should be kept as natural as possible; preserving nature is important.
- Cost-effective solutions should be utilized as much as possible.
- Ensure that pathways are consistently connected to the overall pathway network.
- Implement wayfinding to access the site.
- Provide all-season access to the pathways.

For the bridges, they indicated the following:

- The design should have a low impact on the landscape, and incorporate local materials or signature elements, while connecting to adjacent pathways.
- The bridges are viewed positively by most respondents, providing new viewpoints and opportunities to discover the area.
- For some, the bridges should be a priority, in order to ensure that infrastructure funds are used effectively, taking into consideration the other existing crossing points nearby.
- First Nations should be involved, especially regarding the bridge to Victoria Island.
- Potential impacts on wildlife should be mitigated.
- Lighting design should be sensitive to wildlife, while also highlighting the tailrace area.

We also asked **if they agreed with the proposed locations of the improvements.**

Respondents indicated the following:

- They agreed with the proposed improvements and that the area should be highlighted, especially the heritage aspects.
- Comments related to the locations of the bridges questioned the need for the bridge closest to the Bronson Pulp Mill ruins, since there is already a structure in place.
- For the bridge to Victoria Island, respondents said that First Nations needed to be consulted, since this would bring additional traffic to the area.
- Since this will become a connection point for cyclists, it should be open year-round, and designed with safety in mind.

We then asked participants **if they had any other ideas for the space and what other options we could consider or additions we could make to the project.** They suggested the following:

- A functional landing, made with natural stone, should be included in the design.
- First Nations should be involved in decision making for the project. As well, indigenous plants should be used in the design.
- Various services, such as an information kiosk, washrooms, parking, an outdoor performance area, and picnic area or café were suggested.
- Natural materials should be used.
- Interpretation should be dynamic and interactive, connected to other interpretive themes in the Capital, and could mark the actual Richmond Landing, where settlers arrived after the War of 1812.

As for the **proposed interpretation themes** (Aboriginal, natural, industrial and military heritage), questionnaire respondents indicated the following:

- They agreed with the proposed themes.
- There should be subthemes, either for the military theme (marine history, 100th Regiment of Foot) or the industrial theme (hydroelectricity, local industrialists).

They also suggested that we **consider the following themes:**

- First Nations, peace and reconciliation
- Richmond Landing crossroad and the 100th Regiment of Foot
- The Rideau Trail
- Artists who have depicted the area, from natural landscapes to industrial heritage
- Aquatic ecosystems
- Francophone heritage of the site, women's contribution to the area.

Other comments or suggestions included the following:

- Ensure that First Nations are involved throughout the process.
- The overall vision for the site should be dynamic and bold.
- An eel ladder should be built.
- Native plants should be used, and invasive species should be removed.
- Bike parking needs to be provided.
- All solutions should be fiscally responsible.

Stakeholder feedback

The project team has met with Energy Ottawa, the Royal Canadian Navy, Public Works and Government Services Canada, the City of Ottawa, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Ottawa River Runners Association, the Ottawa-Gatineau Geoheritage Project, the Canadian Navy League (POGO vessel), and the Mill Street Brew Pub. As well, Au Feel de l'Eau and the “Gotta Go Campaign” sent their comments to the NCC.

The main topics of interest to these organizations include the following:

- Ensuring access to the site, through launching/landing points (land, water) and universal access
- Providing an improved experience of the site, and facilitating the discovery of the monument, hydroelectric station, tailrace, geology and amenities.

V – NCC response

The NCC project team has studied all the comments and suggestions received as part of this public consultation. Its responses, grouped according to theme, are detailed below.

Aboriginal communities

- The NCC is committed to maintaining dialogue with First Nations communities, including Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Pikwàkanagàn and Algonquins of Ontario. Discussions and meetings have taken place to gather their comments and suggestions.

Services and infrastructure

- The NCC agrees with the suggestion to expand the service offer at the site. The suggestion to add restaurants, bicycle parking and water access points for kayaks will be considered. These elements will form part of the design concept. The NCC has also noted the need for access to infrastructure such as drinking fountains, washrooms and benches.
- Existing structures will be used as much as possible, taking into consideration universal accessibility, the current situation and ease of maintenance, in order to achieve the main objectives. Regarding the bridge, the NCC agrees to adopt an architectural design that is similar to the surrounding infrastructure. However, a balance must be achieved between the environment, historical heritage, cost and useful function of the bridge.

Natural environment

- The NCC intends that this project will protect the natural environment of the site. The pathways will be kept as natural as possible, while also taking safety, universal accessibility, sustainability and maintenance into consideration. The introduction of indigenous plants will be studied in the final plan, as will the issues related to parking on Victoria Island. Solutions will take targeted needs into account.
- The NCC has taken note of the comments regarding American eel habitat in the area where the work is to be undertaken. It is important to clarify that, according to the data available to the NCC, the area where the work will be undertaken is not American eel habitat. However, the NCC remains open to any new information that may be provided by other stakeholders and agencies in this regard.

Interpretation

- The NCC aims to integrate interpretive elements in collaboration with Canadian Heritage. The NCC has taken note of the suggestions from the public and stakeholders and has provided this input to the Department. Detailed objectives of the interpretation program will be established and finalized for each theme.
- The recommendation that the interpretation panels be produced in Braille and Algonquin, in addition to English and French, will also be taken into consideration.

Design

- As much as possible, the current scenic viewpoints will be preserved in the final plan, and may include additional design elements. The creation of spaces for public art will also be examined.

Other comments

- The safety of cyclists and pedestrians is an NCC priority.
- The final plans will be designed to improve safety, as well as highlight the project elements through pathway lighting that respects the nighttime environment.
- The clearing of pathways in winter is not part of current NCC practice. At a future date, the NCC will examine the feasibility of this suggestion and the operations this would entail.
- The separation of cyclists and pedestrians on multi-use pathways is a priority in the development of the final plan.

VI – Next Steps

The project schedule will continue as follows:

- **Development 2016:** Design, construction contract documents

- **Implementation phased over four years, 2016–2019:** Tender, construction, and installation of interpretation and wayfinding.