

Planning for the Future

Consultation on the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site



An invitation to take part!

The Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site is planning its operations for upcoming years. To this end, we will be holding public consultations from May 22 to June 22, 2018. I encourage you to take part in this process by sharing your thoughts and suggestions.

The purpose of this consultation is to give the partners, community stakeholders and general public an opportunity to get involved in the decision-making process related to managing this national historic site. The management plan is the official document that will guide management of the historic site for the next ten years (2018–2028). It provides orientation for protecting cultural and natural resources, visitor experiences and public education.

This national historic site belongs to you! Join the Parks Canada team in developing a common vision and in protecting this national historic site, while encouraging visitors to discover this unique place.

Nadine Blackburn
Superintendent
La Mauricie and Western Quebec Field Unit

Parks Canada's Mandate

On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.

Importance of the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site

The Battle of the Châteauguay took place during what is commonly known as the “War of 1812,” an armed conflict that marked Canadian–American relations in the early nineteenth century. In the summer of 1813, the United States organized a military expedition against Lower Canada to capture Montréal and cut supply routes to Upper Canada. The northern American army was split into two divisions. The first division, commanded by James Wilkinson, was to march out from Lake Ontario and approach Montréal from the upper Saint Lawrence Valley. The second, led by Wade Hampton, was to follow the Châteauguay River and meet with Wilkinson’s division on Île Perrot. From there, they would begin their joint assault on Montréal. The strategy proved ineffective, however, as Hampton and his troops were intercepted on their way to Montréal by some 300 Canadian and native defenders commanded by Charles-Michel de Salaberry. Other fighters, 1,500 militiamen and 200 natives, were standing nearby in reinforcements. The confrontation took place on October 26, 1813, along the banks of the Châteauguay River near Allan’s Corners. The Canadian and Indigenous victory was considered a national triumph for Lower Canada, and Salaberry became the symbol of the French Canadians’ military value and loyalty.

Today, few remnants of the battle remain publicly accessible, save a collection of objects on exhibition in the interpretation centre and features of the landscape that existed when the battle took place, such as the Châteauguay River.

Celebrations of the battle’s significance began in 1895 with the erection of a stone obelisk. The area was designated a national historic site in 1920 by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) for the following reasons: *“The Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site of Canada commemorates the significance of this battle, occurring on October 26, 1813, and the role that the combatants played in defending Canada against the United States during the War of 1812–1814.”*

In November 1964, the HSMBC recommended that the Government proceed with the acquisition of a site for commemorating and interpreting the battle. The land, purchased in 1968 by the Châteauguay Valley Historical Society, is located near the heart of the battlefield and covers 1.56 hectares, less than 1% of the original 202-hectare battle site, which spanned close to 15 km (see Map 2).

The site managed by Parks Canada is divided into two sections. The first is a relaxation area for visitors and includes an interpretation centre built in 1978, a nineteenth-century log cabin unrelated to the battle, and a parking lot. The second is a small plot of land (24 m x 48 m) located about 300 m west of the interpretation centre and featuring a stone obelisk erected in 1895 to commemorate the battle.

Public exhibitions and films about the battle presented in the interpretation centre highlight the site’s national historical significance. A lookout point and scale model give visitors an idea of the scope of the battlefield and help them better understand the different stages of the confrontation. Outside, an HSMBC commemorative plaque and the obelisk solemnize the event. Lastly, a groomed trail lined with interpretation panels allows visitors to explore a part of the battlefield by car or bicycle.



Planning context

The national historic site opened its doors to the public in 1978. To date, conservation and development efforts have been carried out according to the previous management plan, in effect since 2007. Most of the management measures set out in this plan were implemented. The most notable projects from recent years have involved the visitor experience. In 2008, a groomed trail (archaeotour) was created in partnership with Archéo-Québec and the owners of the neighbouring properties to allow visitors to explore the battlefield by car or bike and learn from interpretation panels how the confrontation unfolded. In 2012, the interpretation centre's exhibitions were updated to allow visitors to explore the site autonomously. A year later, several large-scale events were held on the site commemorating the battle and the bicentenary of the "War of 1812." Lastly, the site periodically hosts activities organized by third parties and partners.

Since 2014, the site is available for self-guided experiences : seven days a week from June 23 to September 3 and on weekends and holidays from September 4 to October 1. In 2016, the site welcomed 3,024 visitors, and a year later, during the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation, this number climbed to 4,213.

The national historic site contributes to its environment. Its visibility comes from its participation in activities and events organized by partners and regional institutions on the battlefield or in the surrounding area ("Battle of the Châteauguay Cross Country Run," historical reenactments, the Ormstown Fair, and more). In 2017, the national historic site became one of the region's welcome points as part of an agreement signed with the Centre local de développement (CLD) du Haut-Saint-Laurent.

Many issues were raised during the management plan's development, including the following:

- **The national historic site's low visitor numbers:** In 2014 and 2015, the national historic site saw visitor numbers drop by more than 57% since the 2011 reference year (3,613 visitors in 2011, compared to 1,542 in 2015). In 2016, the numbers went up to 3,024 visitors. Then, in 2017, visitor numbers reached 4,213 thanks to the free Parks Canada Discovery Pass. However, this growth remains fragile. The national historic site is not an obvious tourist attraction due to its removed location, its themes addressing a limited audience, and the low population of its surrounding area. In addition, few traces of the battle remain visible on the designated site.
- **Relevance of the interpretation centre:** The impressive interpretation centre was designed in 1978 to welcome up to 18,000 visitors annually. Its relevance nowadays is being called into question, however. The centre no longer seems to be the best solution for the national historic site's success, commemorative quality, or visitor experience. The national significance of the Battle of the Châteauguay is largely experienced along the self-guided archaeotour trail outside the zone administered by Parks Canada. Furthermore, the battle is memorialized outside with the commemorative plaque and the obelisk. Lastly, the building is open three months per year, requires over \$600,000 in recapitalization investments, and incurs exorbitant annual heating costs.

Vision

In 2028...

The Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site is a place of discovery, learning, and commemoration that highlights a significant chapter of the country's military history and defence. It recounts the ups and downs of the conflict and tells the story of the Canadians, Indigenous people, and Americans that fought on the battlefield, while situating the battle's significance in the context of the War of 1812.

The importance of this event for Canada is shared with the public through various means, both on and off the territory administered by Parks Canada.

The surrounding communities promote the site by using it to hold activities. Collaboration with various partners and stakeholders allow the site to offer a selection of joint regional tourism options.

The national historic site is well positioned within the region's tourism industry and the selection of historic sites commemorating the War of 1812.



Key Strategies

KEY STRATEGY NO. 1: A VIBRANT SITE WHERE EVERYONE CAN DISCOVER AND COMMEMORATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE OF THE CHÂTEAUGUAY

Thanks to a dynamic and diversified offer of activities and the historic site's participation within the regional tourism network and the network of sites commemorating the War of 1812, a wider range of Canadians will be able to discover and commemorate the significance of the Battle of the Châteauguay and of the people and communities that took part.

Objective 1.1: Implement a varied selection of activities tailored to the needs of the site's target audiences (school groups, servicewomen and servicemen, tourism professionals).

Target: Launch three new or updated activities aimed at the site's target audiences by 2028.

Objective 1.2: Better present the Indigenous communities' role in the battle and the War of 1812 to the public.

Target: Establish a partnership with the Indigenous communities to highlight their contribution by 2022.

Objective 1.3: Increase the site's success by working in concert with partners.

Target: Participate annually in two activities organized jointly with partners.

Target: Participate annually in a joint initiative with other sites commemorating the War of 1812.



KEY STRATEGY NO. 2: A VISITOR EXPERIENCE CENTRED ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Nowadays, the interpretation centre appears to be less essential for learning about the Battle of the Châteauguay. It seems more appropriate to facilitate access to the commemorative messages outside the centre, allowing a greater number of visitors to discover the significance of the battle. Moreover, maintaining the interpretation centre constitutes a major challenge for Parks Canada. Consequently, this strategy aims to improve the visiting options outside the interpretation centre and reassess its management approach.

Objective 2.1: Improve the presentation of the various elements of the site's history outside the interpretation centre.

Target: Improve the interpretation program outside the interpretation centre by 2024.

Target: Keep the obelisk and commemorative plaque in good condition for solemnizing the battle until 2028.

Objective 2.2: Implement a new management approach for the interpretation centre in concert with local and regional stakeholders and partners.

Target: Design a new management approach for the interpretation centre in concert with local and regional stakeholders and partners by 2022.

Target: Implement a new management approach for the interpretation centre by 2028.



Strategic Environmental Assessment summary

In compliance with the Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2010), a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is carried out for all management statements introduced in Parliament. The SEA aims to incorporate environmental considerations into the development of policies, plans, and program proposals to support environmentally conscious decisions. The specific projects developed to implement the historic site's management plan strategies will be separately evaluated to establish if an impact assessment is necessary under the 2012 Canadian Environmental Assessment Act or any successor legislation.

The strategies set out in the proposed management plan will allow Canadians to gain a broader understanding and appreciation of the historic site, strengthen the site's ties with the community, and preserve its heritage resources.

Implementing measures for attaining the objectives set out in this proposed management plan should help to improve the site's visibility, thereby drawing in more visitors and continuing the site's efforts to commemorate the Battle of the Châteauguay. The strategies, objectives, and targets identified in the management plan are unlikely to have negative environmental effects. Impact assessments will evaluate the potential negative effects of the individually proposed projects on the site and its valuable features, including any species at risk and their critical habitats, and help minimize these impacts on the cultural and natural resources, the visitor experience, and the relationships with different partners.

It is impossible to determine whether the management plan will make a significant contribution to the achievement of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy's goals, but it is unlikely that it will hinder their progress.

No significant negative environmental impacts are expected following the implementation of the management plan.



What do you think?

This document summarizes and presents the site, its issues, a vision, key strategies, objectives and measurable targets. Now, it's your turn to take part in the discussion. Here is your chance to add to the conversation and help us develop the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site's management plan. Your knowledge of the area, combined with your experience of the historic site and the future you envision for it are important to us.

How to participate?

There are two ways to share your opinion:

- Send your comments by email to: sebastien.bachmann@pc.gc.ca

Or

- By mail to:

Public Consultation on the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site
Parks Canada Agency at Fort Chambly
2 De Richelieu Street, Chambly, Quebec, Canada J3L 2B9

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or would like further information on the public consultation.

Visit the Parks Canada website:

<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/qc/chateauguay>

You have until June 22 to share your opinions, comments or ideas with us, or to submit a memory.

Thank you for your participation!