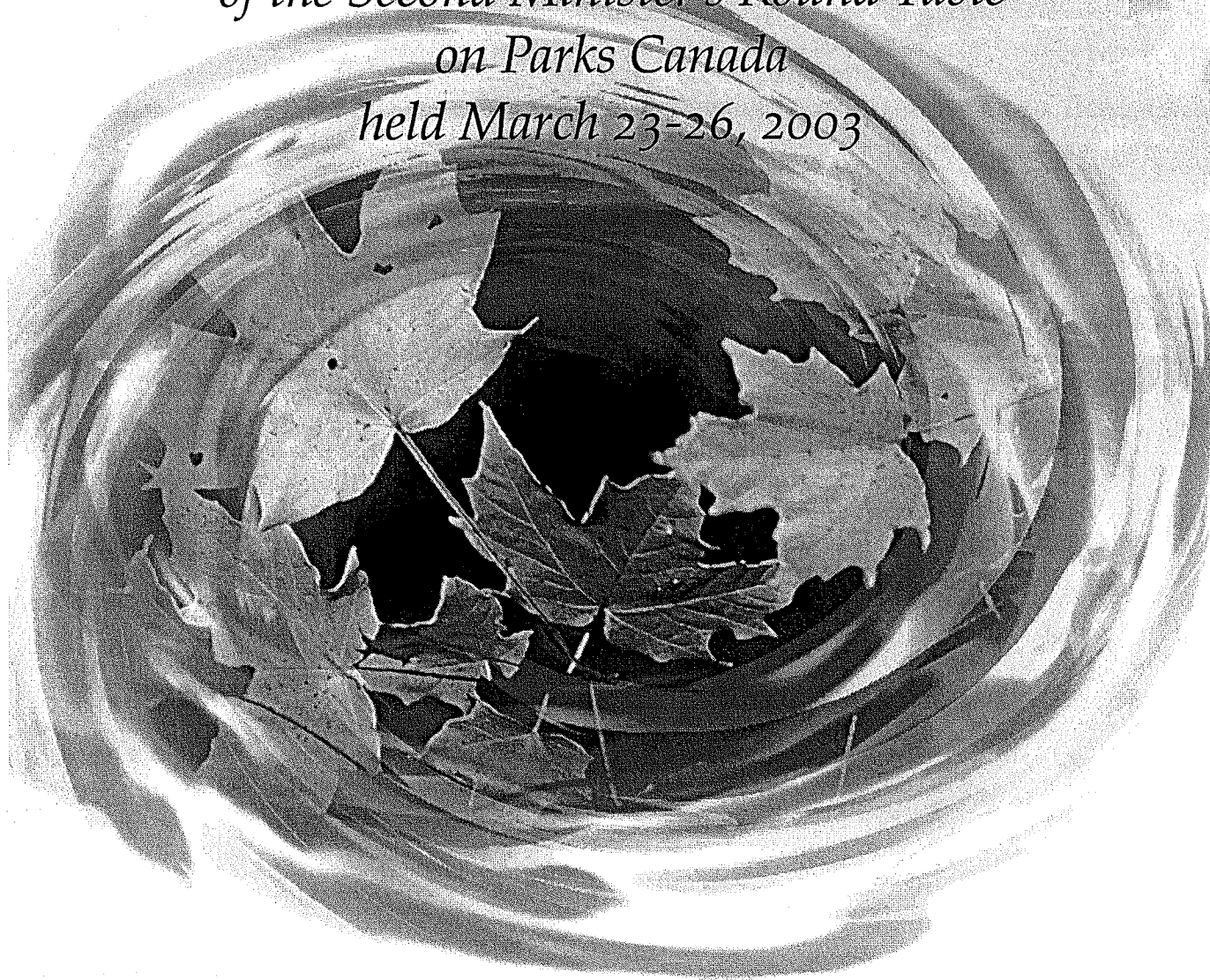




PARKS CANADA AGENCY

*Response to Recommendations
of the Second Minister's Round Table
on Parks Canada
held March 23-26, 2003*

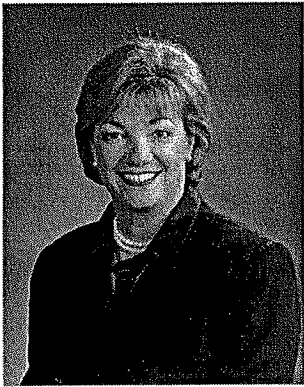


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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



Clearly, the thoughtful Canadians who generously volunteered their time and energy to the 2003 Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada care passionately about the natural, historic and cultural wonders of our country. I am deeply grateful for their wisdom, their knowledge and their guidance.

Two years ago, the recommendations from the first-ever Round Table led to profoundly positive changes. We have moved quickly on the health of Canada's national parks, on the creation of new parks and national marine conservation areas, on new measures for science, and new outreach to Aboriginal peoples, women, multicultural communities and young Canadians. We have made significant strides on ecological integrity, commemorative integrity and service to visitors.

This year's Round Table built on that spirit of progress. The 2003 Round Table was also far more diverse in representation than the initial Round Table. It struck me very clearly that participants from all walks of life see partnerships and cooperation as the hallmarks of future success. I was pleased to hear over and over that we need to keep getting more Canadians involved in making our parks, marine conservation areas and historic sites a success on all possible fronts.

I appreciate the carefully considered and concise Round Table recommendations on the voluntary sector, collaborative research, community relations, philanthropy, infrastructure, training, marketing, branding, cost-sharing, core services, tax legislation, fee structures, science capacity, external communications, education, interpretation and accessibility. The range of recommendations was wide, but those recommendations forge a comprehensive and coherent whole.

Acting on the sound advice provided at the Round Table will entail tremendous commitment and determination by our fellow Canadians who work at Parks Canada. I know they are up to the challenge. It has been my privilege to work with Parks Canada team members all across our country and – time and again – I have witnessed first-hand their enormous dedication to safeguarding our natural and historic blessings. The women and men at Parks Canada have repeatedly embraced change and addressed challenges in a truly professional manner. I am very confident that the two years leading up to the next Minister's Round Table will be ones of progress equally as impressive as the results achieved in the past two years.

It is an honour for me to be charged with ensuring that Canadians' high expectations for our national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas are met. It is a pleasure to be joined in carrying out that duty by so many enthusiastic Canadians who made this year's MRT a real success.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sheila Copps".

Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian Heritage

FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

At least once every two years, the Parks Canada Agency enjoys a unique opportunity to hear directly from Canadians on how we can improve the national parks, national marine conservation areas and national historic sites of Canada. The Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada brings together stakeholders, organizations and people who are passionate about Canada's protected heritage areas to review key issues affecting the Agency and Canada's systems of national parks, national marine conservation areas and national historic sites.

Their insights, views and recommendations provide us with a yardstick by which we can measure our progress in meeting the objectives of Canadians, as well as understand their perceptions of the ecological health of our national parks and marine conservation areas, and the commemorative health of our national historic sites. Seeing the state of these special places through the eyes of other people who are also committed to protecting and celebrating Canada's natural heritage provides us with a new way of looking at things, and helps to shape our vision of how we can best fulfill our mandate.

The 2003 Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada was a resounding success in this regard. Once again, it has provided clear and useful advice to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and to Parks Canada. Advice that we value, and will strive diligently to act on – as the Minister's responses to the recommendations brought forward at the Round Table makes clear.

Just as the advice we received from participants in the 2001 Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada provided the catalyst and a clear incentive for many considerable accomplishments, including the establishment of new national parks, new national historic sites and new legislation to create national marine conservation areas, the recommendations from this year will be instrumental as we chart our course for the next two years.

Every recommendation brought forward in 2001 has now been accomplished or is underway, including the development of new measures on science and conservation, and measures for outreach and inclusion of Aboriginal peoples, women and ethnocultural communities in the system of national historic sites of Canada. The 2001 Round Table also called for more interpretation services, more diverse interpretive perspectives and serious measures to appeal to young Canadians with our programming. There are several creative measures underway to do all of that.

As the Honourable Sheila Copps underscored in her opening address to the participants at the 2003 Round Table, our task is to listen to all voices and ideas, not just those retained in the final recommendations. Everyone who participated in the sessions made a valuable contribution to the event and its success. On behalf of Parks Canada, I thank you for your time, your dedication, and your insight. Your hard work will make a difference.

Participating for the first time in this Minister's Round Table as Chief Executive Officer was truly a privilege. I learned a lot. The event also afforded the whole Parks Canada senior management team an excellent opportunity to understand more clearly the interests of stakeholders in our work and our vision. What I heard was a keen desire for Parks Canada to reach out to a wide variety of partners – be they local, national, individual, volunteer, academic or corporate.

This is an exciting time for Parks Canada. The funding made available in Budget Plan 2003 will go a long way toward realizing the Government of Canada's commitment to create ten new national parks and five national marine conservation areas, and to carry out selected park expansion. I speak for Parks Canada employees across the country when I say we are honoured to be the lead agency in making this happen. It is both a privilege and a pleasure.

*Alan Latourelle
Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada Agency*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between March 23 and 26, 2003, the Honourable Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage, hosted the second Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada. This event fulfilled the requirement, under Section 6 of the *Parks Canada Agency Act*, for a round table of people and organizations interested in matters for which the Agency is responsible to be convened, at least once every two years, in order to advise the Minister on the performance of Parks Canada. Participants made 21 recommendations to the Minister during the 2003 Round Table. The Minister's response to those recommendations, as required under the Act, is provided in this document.

The 2003 Round Table addressed four critical elements of Parks Canada: National Parks and National Marine Conservation Areas; National Historic Sites; Reaching Canadians; and the financial challenges facing the Agency in moving Towards a Sustainable Service Offer. A common thread emerged in the recommendations that flowed from all four sessions – the high value stakeholders place on Parks Canada consulting and collaborating with partners, and working in partnerships.

The first session of the Round Table examined National Parks and National Marine Conservation Areas. It had two themes: the maintenance and restoration of ecological integrity and visitor experience at the existing national parks, and the establishment of new national parks and national marine conservation areas. Many of the recommendations from this session urged Parks Canada to work with partners in such areas as the strategic use of volunteers, shaping and communicating ecological integrity messages, and developing research agendas and capabilities. Parks Canada will respond to these recommendations by initiating new consultations and continuing to build collaborative working relationships with stakeholders.

The second session focused on National Historic Sites. It was also inspired by notions of collaboration, based on two themes: capacity building in training, conservation, interpretation and marketing, and finding ways to increase the profile and visitation of national historic sites by encouraging collaboration between members of the family of sites and stakeholders. In response to a recommendation to develop a national strategy to create alliances, Parks Canada has made a commitment to build on successes experienced in Ontario, British Columbia and other provinces. Two very creative recommendations urged Parks Canada to raise its profile and marketing reach by encouraging members of the arts and letters community to act as honorary patrons of specific national historic sites, exploring a greater degree of branding and making greater use of visual identifiers.

The third session brought invited stakeholders together to consider the challenges being faced by Parks Canada in delivering a sustainable service offer. This session had two themes: services, costs and program reductions, and finding new ways to deliver programs and services. A participant consensus voting system was used to gauge the level of support for the recommendations that flowed from the session. The recommendation which received the most support was a call for Parks Canada to review its assets and clearly identify core versus non-core services, with the goal of divesting non-core services and activities. In response to this recommendation, Parks Canada has agreed that these assessments should take place, and that this will be done through a sustainable business planning process that is being initiated throughout the organization. Partnerships emerged as a theme in this session as well, with recommendations that Parks Canada develop partnerships to: secure philanthropic and other external funding; deliver non-core services; increase its science capacity; and explore creative methods to benefit from revenue-sharing dividends resulting from resource extraction, particularly in the far North. All of these recommendations on the increased use of partnerships, which Parks Canada largely supports, provide further clear evidence that stakeholders want the Agency to explore creative ways to partner with individuals and organizations to meet its mandated objectives. In doing so, Parks Canada will respect both the spirit and the letter of the *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Agency Act*, which require us to make the maintenance and restoration of ecological integrity and commemorative integrity our first priorities in the management and operation of Canada's national parks, national marine conservation areas and national historic sites. The Acts provide clear direction on the activities that are permissible within national parks, and on Parks Canada's role in protecting these special places for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

Parks Canada is working hard to establish effective and collaborative relationships with communities, stakeholders and businesses located adjacent to national parks, both to explore potential joint initiatives and to protect the ecological integrity of our parks. One of the important lessons we have learned over the years is that activities that take place outside of parks can and do affect ecological integrity within our parks.

The final session focused on a crucial theme that is important across all areas of Parks Canada – Reaching Canadians. This session's two main themes were: making Canada's national treasures more relevant, and making visitor experiences more meaningful. During this session, an overall recommendation was made to review the Agency's existing external communications strategy against a number of criteria. In response to this recommendation, Parks Canada will initiate a complete review of its external communications strategies and develop a performance measurement framework. Four of the six recommendations from the session relate to the use of partnerships to achieve goals, including a recommendation calling on Parks Canada to make linking with the education community a high priority. In response, Parks Canada is launching the National School Curriculum Program, a collaborative and consultation-driven initiative that will specifically address the intent of this recommendation.

Clearly, the 21 recommendations express a strong desire for Parks Canada to work in partnership with stakeholders and other organizations, relying on collaboration and consultation, to achieve shared heritage and ecological integrity goals. The Agency has heard this advice, and will strive to meet the expectations of the stakeholders, organizations and people who participated in the Minister's 2003 Round Table on Parks Canada. In doing so, we will respect both the spirit and intent of the recommendations, as well as the spirit and intent of the *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Agency Act*. Parks Canada benefits from having a mandate that is meaningful to many Canadians, which provides us with unique opportunities to work with like-minded individuals and organizations in achieving our common goals of protecting and preserving Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

NATIONAL PARKS AND NATIONAL MARINE CONSERVATION AREAS

Recommendations were made under two themes in the National Parks and National Marine Conservation Areas session. Theme I centred around maintaining or restoring ecological integrity and visitor experiences in the existing National Parks of Canada, while theme II focussed on the establishment of new national parks and national marine conservation areas.

Theme I – Maintaining or restoring the ecological integrity and visitor experiences in the National Parks of Canada.

Recommendation:

- 1. Develop a strategic approach to stimulate interest and develop opportunities with the voluntary sector (e.g. volunteer management, providing mechanisms for sharing best practices, training and volunteer recognition).**

Response:

Parks Canada is developing a more strategic approach to the way it manages and works with volunteers, which will be formalized over the next two years. Opportunities exist and will be made available for interested non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to participate in various Parks Canada volunteer projects, particularly those related to ecological and commemorative integrity. NGOs will be invited to use and adapt the Parks Canada volunteer program procedures manual and self-study kit, as well as to attend Parks Canada's volunteer program training sessions. In addition, Parks Canada has assumed a leadership role within the federal government by coordinating the efforts of an Interdepartmental Committee on Volunteers (ICV). The ICV shares best practices on volunteer issues including risk management, insurance, training, recognition, etc. With the support of the ICV, a more strategic approach to the management of volunteer programs within the federal government is currently under consideration and should include opportunities for the not-for-profit sector as well.

Recommendation:

- 2. Develop research agendas and capabilities in partnership with museums, universities and other government departments. The research agendas should include provisions for data sharing and information management. Establish Centres of Excellence for park research, including implementing the research/science recommendations from the first Minister's Round Table.**

Response:

Parks Canada will develop research agendas and capabilities in priority areas through partnership with museums, universities and other government departments, and will explore potential opportunities for establishing Centres of Excellence with interested members of the academic community. Funding provided in Budget 2003 for restoring the ecological health of Canada's parks will be used to expand current efforts, taking account of the specific directions recommended. Future park management plans will include clear research agendas addressing natural, social and cultural science needs.

Recommendation:

- 3. Shape the ecological integrity vision/message with the help of partners, visitors, local communities and staff and through the use of communications activities, help communities see the value of conserving national parks and adjacent lands/ecosystems. Train staff on community relations in order to build and strengthen partnerships in support of ecological integrity.**

Response:

With new funding provided in Budget 2003, Parks Canada will continue to develop and implement a comprehensive communications program designed to inform, influence and involve those audiences who can best help the organization achieve its ecological integrity objectives. Inherent in this effort will be continued opportunity for stakeholders to shape Parks Canada's ecological integrity vision and messaging. Staff, local communities, visitors and partners are all priority audiences. The key tenets of the program will be for audiences to 1) see ecological integrity in action in their parks, 2) understand how it benefits both the parks and themselves, and 3) have opportunities to become involved. Ultimately, a key message to convey will be that the recreational and educational benefits of national parks, as well as their ecological benefits, depend on the restoration and maintenance of their health and wholeness.

Partnerships and strong relations with stakeholders are important to many functions, e.g. resource conservation, heritage presentation and visitor services. Parks Canada is considering how to develop further staff skills in this area.

"The Prime Minister and I announced plans to create ten new national parks over the course of the next five years and to enlarge three existing national parks. We've also announced plans to establish five marine conservation areas. With these two announcements, the total amount of land and water protected by our country will be an area larger than the whole of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick combined. At the same time, we announced that major measures will be taken to restore ecological integrity."

**Honourable Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian
Heritage**

Remarks made at the 2003
Minister's Round Table on
Parks Canada

Theme II – Establishing new national parks and national marine conservation areas.

Recommendation:

4. Investigate ways to facilitate private philanthropic giving to advance the establishment of new parks and the expansion of existing parks.

Response:

Parks Canada is always willing to investigate and pursue new ways to facilitate private philanthropic giving that advances new national park and national marine conservation area establishment or the expansion of existing parks. Parks Canada has worked in partnership with conservation organizations, such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Nature Trust of B.C., which have facilitated gift giving on occasion to assist in establishing new national parks or adding lands to national parks. Such philanthropic support has helped in the creation of the Grasslands, Vuntut, Gwaii Haanas and Gulf Islands national parks and national park reserves. Parks Canada will continue to explore opportunities for philanthropic giving on a case-by-case basis as an important way to achieve success in our mandate.

Recommendation:

5. Create a task force to explore and identify new benefits, such as carbon sinks, water purification, and regional social and economic developments.

Response:

Parks Canada does not currently support the creation of a task force to pursue these issues, but will be an active participant when the World Congress on Protected Areas examines them in September 2003. Following these discussions, the Agency will be in a better position to consider and act on any relevant recommendations. In addition, the Canadian Parks Council has established a task force to examine these issues, and Parks Canada will have access to its deliberations and conclusions. During the feasibility stage of establishing a new park, Parks Canada conducts studies on regional and local economic benefits as a part of its review process. Along with its partners, Parks Canada will continue to improve on these efforts and to better communicate the economic, social and ecological benefits offered by new or expanded parks during both the park establishment and management planning stages, and in subsequent interpretive and educational programs.

Recommendation:

6. Ensure funding is directed toward the protection of existing national parks and their infrastructure, even if this slows progress of the expansion of the national parks system.

Response:

Funding provided through Budget Plan 2003 to expand the number of national parks and national marine conservation areas of Canada is needed to advance the completion of Canada's national parks and national marine areas systems before the remaining candidate areas for park or marine area establishment are lost to development. Our goal is to ensure that each of Canada's 39 natural terrestrial regions and 29 natural marine areas are represented in the systems with at least one national park or national marine conservation area.

The federal government also provided funding through Budget Plan 2003 for the protection of existing national parks. In order to address the infrastructure issues within existing national parks, Parks Canada will develop an overall strategy that will consider seeking additional appropriations, increasing user fees and reviewing levels of service.

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES

The National Historic Sites session followed two themes. Theme I looked at building capacity in training, conservation, interpretation and marketing at Canada's national historic sites. Theme II revolved around finding ways for members of the family of national historic sites and other stakeholders to collaborate on increasing the number of visitors to sites as well as their profile with the public.

Theme I – Building capacity in training, conservation, interpretation and marketing at Canada's national historic sites

Recommendation:

- 7. Develop a national strategy to create alliances that bring together national historic sites, professional heritage associations, communities and the media to encourage cross marketing and to support shared training opportunities.**

"As we safeguard nature, we must honour our history. Historic sites have helped forge our identity, the historic events that have shaped our destiny, the historic people whose wisdom and determination laid the foundation of who we are and what we are."

**Honourable Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian Heritage**

Remarks made at the 2003 Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada

Response:

Parks Canada will develop a national strategy, based on successes in Ontario, British Columbia, Newfoundland and other provinces, to: create alliances that will bring together national historic sites owned and managed by others; encourage alliances to more closely link with heritage associations, communities and the media; explore ways to use the alliances to support training opportunities; and share best practices among national historic sites and other stakeholders. Parks Canada will work closely with stakeholders to achieve these goals. In developing a marketing program for National Historic Sites, Parks Canada will explore ways of encouraging cross marketing.

Theme II – Finding ways for members of the family of National Historic Sites and other stakeholders to collaborate to increase profile and visitation.

Recommendation:

- 8. The Minister of Canadian Heritage, together with the Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada, should invite the arts and letters community to take an active and dynamic role in making a bridge between Canadians and their national historic sites by challenging such bodies, as the Canada Council, to become involved. Appropriate Canadian authors and artists should be encouraged to act as honorary patrons at specific relevant national historic sites of Canada.**

Response:

Parks Canada will explore possible opportunities with the artistic and cultural community, particularly the literary sector, to deliver the stories of Canada's national parks and national historic sites to a wider audience. The willingness of individual artists to act as honorary patrons will also be explored.

Recommendation:

- 9. There should be a greater degree of branding to increase profile and visitation at Canada's national historic sites. Visual identifiers should be developed for use by the family of national historic sites.**

Response:

Parks Canada agrees and has planned a fall 2003 workshop to involve key stakeholders in the development of a branding strategy for the "family" of national historic sites. Following the development of a branding strategy, and subject to wider consultations within the NHS family, visual identifiers will be developed for potential use by the family of national historic sites.

Recommendation:

- 10. To achieve a breakthrough in cultural attitudes by Canadians toward understanding the economic, cultural and aesthetic benefits of our heritage, the Government of Canada should make a much more substantial and sustained contribution of time, leadership and resources for the preservation and promotion of Canada's national historic sites.**

"We're bringing to life the new National Historic Sites Plan to focus on the historic accomplishments of those Canadians whose stories were never told. Canadian women, who worked side by side with men in the two Great Wars and whose accomplishments were never acknowledged. Aboriginal Peoples speaking 54 languages and whose stories were virtually absent from the pages of Canada's history books as well as multicultural communities who have been in this country for 400 years."

**Honourable Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian Heritage**

Remarks made at the 2003 Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada

Response:

Parks Canada will continue to develop the Historic Places Program, ensuring that national historic sites will have full access to the program once it is in place. Parks Canada is also collaborating with the Department of Canadian Heritage in the development of the Historic Places Initiative (HPI). As part of this effort, Parks Canada is working to ensure that eligible for-profit national historic sites will be included on the Canadian Register of Historic Places, so that they can be eligible for the planned HPI contribution program. Finally, Parks Canada will continue to seek new funding for the National Historic Sites of Canada Cost-Sharing Program, to provide assistance to the many more national historic sites that belong to the not-for-profit sector. Parks Canada has already received policy approval to renew the cost-sharing program as a way of supporting national historic sites owned and managed by others.

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE SERVICE OFFER

The session discussing a sustainable service offer had two themes: reducing programs, services and costs; and finding new ways to deliver programs and services.

Theme I – Reducing programs, services and costs.

Recommendation:

- 11. Parks Canada should review its assets and clearly identify core vs. non-core services. Conservation and presentation are the highest priorities for investment. Other services are a lesser priority. Following this review, Parks Canada should develop strategies to shed non-core services and activities.**

Response:

Parks Canada recognizes the need to rationalize its service offering and its associated assets, and has initiated a comprehensive process to identify core and non-essential services. Field units, service centres and the national office are required to prepare and present sustainable business plans that outline strategies and actions to manage within current budget allocations. Templates defining appropriate service standards have been developed to help guide the planning process and some field units have already begun to adjust their service offer by adjusting or divesting services, and in many instances closing facilities. Parks Canada will work with friends and partners to explore ways to involve them in the delivery of services in parks and sites. Parks Canada will also work with central agencies to identify new funding to recapitalize those assets that have been identified as essential and core to the mandate.

Recommendation:

- 12. Parks Canada should investigate and promote changes to tax legislation that will improve benefits to donors of nationally significant natural and cultural resources to approved public agencies.**

"I want to share with you how I use and how the Parks Canada employees and management representatives that are here are using this Round Table. We are not only using the formal recommendations. We have listened. We have participated. We have had people throughout the Round Tables sitting with you. Our job is to listen to all voices, not only the final recommendations."

Alan Latourelle
Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada

Remarks made at the 2003 Minister's
Round Table on Parks Canada

Response:

Parks Canada supports the spirit and intent of this recommendation and will continue to explore more effective means to allow the tax system to better support the achievement of Agency goals. In recent years, Parks Canada has sought changes to the capital gains treatment on "ecogifts", as defined in the Environment Canada Ecological Gifts Program. Parks Canada continues to work with partners, stakeholders and the Department of Finance to seek innovative solutions to this challenge.

Recommendation:

- 13. Parks Canada should be continually reviewing and adjusting fee structures, using principles of fairness, marketplace value, and choice. Special considerations should be provided to local and resident park users.**

Response:

Parks Canada is sensitive to its fee levels, and issues related to fees, and will continue to consult with groups, individuals and the travel industry. The fee structure adopted by Parks Canada is reviewed on a continuous basis and is based on the principles of fairness and marketplace value. Fees for entry and for personal services have become an important element in the financial structure of every park and site, where they are used to re-capitalize assets and to maintain and improve services. Many primary users of Canada's national parks are regional residents. Parks Canada establishes special fee considerations, such as early bird seasonal entry fees, that are advantageous to local users.

Recommendation:

- 14. Parks Canada should facilitate and encourage sponsorships, new marketing opportunities, and protection and licensing of Parks Canada's intellectual property.**

Response:

With assistance from key partners, Parks Canada will market national historic sites to create better awareness and interest in these national treasures. Parks Canada has developed a new framework to guide the development of appropriate partnerships and sponsorships, and to help protect and present Canada's national parks and national historic sites. The Agency has also developed multi-media guidelines on the licensing and third-party use of images and footage related to national parks and national historic sites. Intellectual property will be reviewed and managed in accordance with federal guidelines and policies.

Recommendation:

- 15. Parks Canada should explore opportunities to develop partnership arrangements and mechanisms that: a) encourage external and philanthropic funding (e.g. Traveller's Philanthropy); b) help deliver non-core services in the areas of service delivery and infrastructure; c) increase science capacity, particularly for marine ecosystems; d) use revenue sharing dividends from external resource extraction (e.g. mining, diamond extraction in the Territories).**

Response:

- a) Parks Canada will explore opportunities to develop partnership arrangements and mechanisms that encourage external and philanthropic funding.
- b) Parks Canada has been working and will continue to work with friends and partners to deliver park services and infrastructure. Where possible and economically sound in the long term, Parks Canada will entertain arrangements for the delivery of non-core services by others at its parks and sites.
- c) Funding provided in Budget Plan 2003 for restoring the ecological health of Canada's parks will be used to expand science-based partnerships. As a result, Parks Canada will have greater access to the scientific information needed for the management of national parks and NMCAs. Marine science is an area of growing importance, and partnerships to enhance Parks Canada's capacity in that area will be important.
- d) Parks Canada agrees to explore revenue sharing dividends from resource extraction activities in ecosystems surrounding national parks. However, it will always be cognizant of its mandate to protect the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks, and of the fact that activities which take place in the areas adjacent to parks have the potential to impact the ecological integrity of those parks.

REACHING CANADIANS

The session on reaching Canadians focussed on two themes: making Canada's national treasures more relevant to Canadians and making the visitor's experience more meaningful. One overall recommendation (16) was made outside the parameters of the two session themes.

Overall recommendation

- 16. Review existing external communications strategy to: sharpen focus on target audiences; clarify and confirm objectives; define measurable outcomes; and, develop an action plan including involvement by partners.**

Response:

Parks Canada will review its external communications strategy in 2003-04 in order to strengthen, where possible, the overall impact of its communications, marketing, education and information services. A Performance Measurement Framework for Parks Canada's external communications is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2003. As part of the development of this framework, the target audiences, specific objectives and measurable outcomes will be defined more precisely.

Theme I – Making Canada's national treasures more relevant to Canadians

Recommendation:

- 17. Parks Canada should adopt a strong role in the communication of knowledge regarding Canada's heritage, and maximize partnerships at the national and local level with historical and nature/conservation organizations to extend and broaden the reach.**

Response:

Parks Canada is pursuing efforts to work collaboratively with leading heritage organizations, such as Canadian Geographic; the Canadian Nature Federation; Canadian Museum of Nature; National History Society of Canada (Beaver Magazine); and the Canadian College of Teachers. Other national and local environmental and non-governmental heritage organizations will be sought to extend and broaden the reach.

Recommendation:

- 18. Links with the education community should be a high priority for Parks Canada. The Agency and its education partners should develop, through consultation with users, relevant, engaging classroom resources and support materials as well as learning opportunities for teachers and other educational multipliers.**

Response:

In 2003, Parks Canada will launch a National School Curriculum Program to raise awareness and understanding of Canada's natural and cultural heritage among young Canadians and to help build the next generation of heritage stewards. The objective of this program is to make stories about national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas available to teachers and students across the country. The priority will be to work with educators: curriculum developers, faculties of education, teachers and teacher associations. The learning materials that result will complement provincial or territorial curricula, and will be developed in consultation with teachers. Parks Canada is putting in place a cross-Canada network of staff to implement the program.

Theme II – Making the visitor's experience more meaningful

Recommendation:

- 19. Parks Canada should do a detailed national review with partners to develop a national interpretation/education plan that identifies clear goals and best practices. This plan should guide the development of park and site interpretation programs with well-defined, measurable objectives.**

Response:

Parks Canada will begin this review process in the summer and fall of 2003 with a national study on the state of its interpretation/education programming. Appropriate stakeholders will be consulted during the review process. Recommendations from the study will catalyze planning of future onsite programming. They will be wedded to more general and specific communications/education strategies related to Engaging Canadians, ecological integrity, species at risk, commemorative integrity and urban outreach in order to achieve the desired results.

Recommendation:

- 20. Working with like-minded partners, Parks Canada should strive to ensure a high standard of professionalism and authenticity in its interpretative activities (from traditional, didactic exhibits to contemporary multi-media programs which complement a strong personal interpretation program), to provide diverse audiences with learning experiences focused on a sense of place.**

Response:

Parks Canada will continue to strive for excellence in its interpretive activities through professional development. Beginning in 2003, innovation funding will be made available to encourage the development of new personal interpretation programs and enriched learning activities. In addition, innovation funding for Aboriginal heritage presentation will be maintained. Authenticity of experience and a sense of place will continue to be foci of Parks Canada's efforts to renew its heritage presentation. As well, Parks Canada will continue its ongoing efforts to present stories at its parks and sites through many voices. Throughout all of its interpretive and educational renewal efforts, Parks Canada will seek to work cooperatively with its many partners.

Recommendation:

- 21. All national parks and national historic sites should respect federal accessibility policy; ensure that information on Parks Canada locations accessible to the public is available; and, that employees are trained on welcoming people with special needs.**

Response:

As a matter of practice, Parks Canada seeks to provide access to all citizens. Parks Canada began an extensive review of accessibility at national parks and national historic sites in 1990, with the requirement of a service plan for barrier-free access at each site. The Agency received additional funding to address priority projects that were identified in this initiative. All new facilities are designed and built to meet high standards; however, in retrofitting existing facilities, Parks Canada may not always be able to provide full accessibility due to terrain conditions, topography, fixed building constraints or historic fabric.

Although, all Parks Canada publications contain general information regarding disabled-persons access to facilities, work is continuing on enhancing the level of information available on the Parks Canada Web site regarding accessibility. Parks Canada staff engaged in welcoming visitors and providing visitor service receive both annual and as-needed training on the accessibility of site facilities and services.

NEXT STEPS

During the next two years, Parks Canada will take the necessary steps to begin, where appropriate, implementing the responses to the recommendations of the Minister's Second Round Table on Parks Canada, and will review its priorities to ensure that the organization's efforts are focused on the key activities necessary to achieve our commitments. Our progress toward meeting these goals and to further consider opportunities to safeguard and preserve the well-being of Canada's natural and cultural heritage will be reviewed at the next Minister's Round Table.

The implementation of the responses will be reflected in the various plans, reports and other significant documents that detail our public accountabilities, including the Corporate Plan, Report on Plans and Priorities, Annual Report, and Performance Report, and in the Field Unit Sustainable Business Plans and the park/site management plans. These documents are available on the Parks Canada Web site (www.parkscanada.gc.ca) or by contacting your local park or site office.