



Laurier House
National Historic Site

Lieu historique national de la
Maison-Laurier

Laurier House National Historic Site Management Planning **Consultation Report**

September 2019

Laurier House National Historic Site Public Consultation Report

Introduction

The management plan for Laurier House National Historic Site is currently being reviewed and finalized. As a part of this revision, the Parks Canada Agency offered the public and community stakeholders the opportunity to give their opinions on the management approach and objectives proposed for the site for the next ten years. This public consultation was held from May 15th to July 15th, 2019 (8 weeks).

This document outlines this consultation process and presents a summary of the opinions expressed by the citizens, community stakeholders and regional representatives that were consulted.

Objectives

The consultation had two objectives:

- To make known the management approach and objectives proposed for the draft management plan, which included elements of the site's Visitor Experience Strategy (2017).
- Obtain the views and comments of the public and partners to allow Parks Canada to adjust and improve the proposed management plan.

Consultation Process

The national historic site management planning team developed a "public consultation newsletter" that covered the following points:

- The historic significance of the site;
- The operation of the site;
- The key achievements since the 2007 management plan came into effect;
- The vision for the site; and
- The proposed management approach for the next ten years, including key strategies and objectives.

The newsletter, published in French and English, was posted on the historic site's website from May 15 2019 to July 15, 2019. The public was invited to read it and make comments and suggestions by email, in-person or by mail. This consultation was promoted on the Rideau Canal National Historic Site's Facebook account on May 29 and May 30, 2019 where it reached 2,398 individuals. The consultation was also advertised in local newspapers (the Ottawa Citizen, Le Droit, the Centretown Buzz, and Sandy Hill's monthly community newsletter). A link to the online consultation was posted on the Consulting with Canadians website.

Personalized emails with information about the public open house were sent to elected officials and to regional partners, inviting the parties to share their comments (see *Appendix I Partners Engaged*).

A public meeting was held on Thursday May 30th, 2019 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., at the site. The issues and objectives targeted by the draft management plan and the Visitor Experience Strategy, were presented by the site manager, and participant comments were recorded. Participants expressed an interest in the site's history and were informed about the issues that Parks Canada will pay particular attention to over the coming years. The site also received five emails from members of the public.

Separate from the broader public engagement process, discussions were held with Chief Kirby Whiteduck of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, who expressed no concern or comment on the management direction of Laurier House National Historic Site. Moving forward, the site team will continue to engage with Indigenous partners to integrate Indigenous perspectives into the site's narrative.

Summary of the main comments received during the consultations

Vision

The participants generally agreed with the proposed vision and found it to be inspiring. They would like to see more reference to Laurier House being one of the only mansions of its era that can be visited in Ottawa. There was support for a vision of the site as a place of debate and as a place where all Canadians can connect with the stories of two Prime Ministers. Participants in the consultation also expressed a desire for the site to work with partners to increase relevance and benefit from cross-promotion.

Strategy 1: A site of great relevance to Canadians

The management team presented some elements of the Visitor Experience Strategy (2017) at the public consultation since one of the objectives of this management plan is the implementation of this approach. This included a presentation on identified target markets and plans to develop the second and third floors of the house. Feedback was received that interactive exhibits and programs are supported, with many ideas brought up for what these visitor experience products could look like. There was a concern that any introduction of technology must be balanced so that it does not distract from the authenticity that the site is valued for. People at the public open house also expressed the desire for Parks Canada to present the Laurier House stories from many viewpoints, especially the perspective of servants, and the social history associated with a mansion like Laurier House. There was also support for resurrecting programs like “Tea and Theatre on the Veranda” and potentially involving local university theatre departments. Many neighbours miss this program and found that it was an excellent way of presenting the house and Canadian history, in entertaining and instructive ways.

“Political history doesn’t sell. Downton Abbey-fying the place could just be the carrot that gets people interested in King and Laurier.”

-Open House Participant

Parks Canada’s desire to increase visitation at Laurier House was understood. Questions arose about the site’s flexibility with fees for target markets the site wishes to attract. Feedback was also received that the site should work to develop a parking or transit solution, perhaps through partners.

“I visit with my grandkids when I know there is something new going on. I assume I will learn something different.”

-Open House Participant

A common theme during public consultation was the importance of the house within the Sandy Hill community. Several partnering and engagement opportunities were highlighted which reinforces the importance of objective 1.3 referring to partners being engaged in the site’s programming. The vision for the Prime Ministers Row initiative complements the proposed vision for Laurier House and the site could serve as an anchor location for this endeavor. Within the community, there are also opportunities to work with Heritage Ottawa for the Laurier

Avenue walking tours, the Ottawa Historical Society, and the All Saints event venue directly across the street. Laurier House staff were encouraged to think beyond the site’s property and increase the house’s visibility through networking opportunities across the city, including the Ottawa Museums Network, the national museums, and regional heritage fairs. Alignment with the museums of Ottawa could help with promotion of the site through participation in free admission nights on Thursdays, passes at the local libraries, and packaging opportunities.

Strategy 2: A place to connect with the different stories of Canada

There was positive reception to the idea of presenting the history of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and William Lyon Mackenzie King from multiple perspectives, beyond the traditional narrative. This would have to be done respectfully through work with Indigenous groups and multicultural groups.

The site also received positive feedback for opening the back of the second and third floors for exhibits and programming. There was input that, with the development of the second and third floors, the site

should consider the importance of maintaining some open spaces that could be used for temporary or rotating exhibits. A space that is left open could be beneficial for work with partners such as Library and Archives Canada or the Ottawa Art Gallery.

Strategy 3: Protection and presentation of our national treasure

There was general support for Key Strategy 3. Parks Canada could explain the authenticity of the site better (e.g. the instructions in Mackenzie King's will). The site is an exemplary example of authenticity, the most authentic across the Parks Canada Agency, and this message needs to be delivered to Canadians. There was wide support for bringing conservation work out of the nearby Parks Canada lab and into the house for people to see.

Conclusion

The consultation exercise proved to be a positive one and enabled Parks Canada to improve its approach to the management of the national historic site and to its work with the public and stakeholders. As a whole, the people who participated in the consultations expressed that they were in favour of this approach and supported the management objectives proposed by Parks Canada.

The management plan will be finalized by the end of 2019.

Finally, Parks Canada would like to thank all the participants that took part in the consultation exercise for having submitted their ideas and vision concerning the future of this national historic site.

Appendix I – Partners Engaged

Cultural Heritage Groups

- Action Sandy Hill
- Arts Theatre Community
- Prime Minister's Row
- Ukrainian Society of Ottawa
- Association des Communautés Francophones d'Ottawa

Tourism Groups

- Ottawa Gatineau Hotel Association
- Ottawa Tourism
- Tourisme Outaouais
- WHERE Magazine

Government

- City of Ottawa
- Department of Canadian Heritage
- Library and Archives Canada
- Member of Parliament - Federal
 - Ottawa-Vanier : Mona Fortier
- Member of Parliament – Provincial
 - Ottawa-Vanier : Nathalie Des Rosiers
- National Capital Commission
- Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture

Indigenous Partners

- Algonquins of Ontario, including the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation – Chief Kirby Whiteduck

Other Area Attractions

- All Saints Event Space
- Canadian Museum of History
- Canadian Museum of Nature
- Canadian War Museum
- Chateau Laurier
- East Block Parliament
- Haunted Walks Ottawa
- Lady Dive Bus Tours
- Mackenzie King Estate
- Rideau Hall

Educational Institutions

- Algonquin College
- Carleton University & Ottawa University
- Local school boards, teachers who have previously visited with their classes
- Parks Canada Campus Clubs