



PRESS RELEASE

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COMMUNITY VOICES LAY OUT BOLD PROPOSALS FOR *REIMAGINING QUEEN ELIZABETH DRIVEWAY*

OTTAWA, 16 NOVEMBER 2021 - Today, Parkways for People released [*Reimagining Queen Elizabeth Driveway*](#); the first in a series of papers that narrates community voices rethinking NCC parkways as spaces for people. This document lays out three proposals for Queen Elizabeth Driveway (QED) that *put the park back in parkway*.

Many are concerned that the highly popular parkway closures during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, where space was regularly provided for active users on five local parkways, has come to an end. There is also a concern that, if there is a decision to extend active parkways into 2022, the NCC will simply repeat the model of the last two summers and miss out on an opportunity for transformational change.

Reimagining Queen Elizabeth Driveway lays out three ambitious options for realigning this space to the original NCC mandate of creating parkways that help people access the greenspaces and waterways of the region. In the 1950s that meant a scenic drive. Today, it's time for new models and new visions.

“The response from the community has been incredible. We’ve seen the most amazing ideas come forward for reinventing Queen Elizabeth Driveway as a space for people.” -- Erin Maher, co-lead of Parkways for People

New visions for QED that have come forward from the community include:

1. Replicate Gatineau Park. Make QED active by default, with motorized vehicles welcome three times a week for scenic drives and for special events at Lansdowne. This option would include accommodating those experiencing mobility challenges and could involve repurposing the roadway during winter, either for seasonal activities or reopened for cars.
2. Reveal a Natural Urban Park. QED between Pretoria Bridge and Fifth Ave is a natural park when traffic is removed, with people using the space for picnics, gatherings and games. Looking forward, this greenspace could be a park with a focus on advancing reconciliation, featuring indigenous art, history and other ideas developed in collaboration with First Nations. Greater access to the water could be provided, in terms of paths and seating but also through a new hub for renting canoes, kayaks and paddle boards. Enhanced accessible programming and equipment could be provided for those experiencing mobility challenges. Winter activities could include a reliable on-land skating track alongside the climate-dependent Rideau Canal, as well as a focal point for new Canadians and others to learn how to ski and skate.
3. Create a Rideau Canal National Park. Canada created its first national urban park in 2017. The US has long had urban national parks, such as the National Mall in Washington, DC. The Rideau Canal and surrounding federal lands could be converted into parkland. This national park could make room for both vehicles and active users and incorporate the urban park elements noted in other options.

NCC parkway pilots in 2021 were exceptionally popular with close to 750,000 visits by active users on closed parkways (Queen Elizabeth Driveway, Colonel By Drive, Sir John A MacDonald Parkway, Sir George-Etienne Cartier Parkway and the Gatineau Park parkways). For Queen Elizabeth Driveway, this often amounted to over 5,000 daily visits when the roadway was closed to cars. Many in the community are asking to extend and expand this practice.

“We have an opportunity today to transform the national capital region on a scale similar to what was done in the 1970s with the creation of the Rideau Canal Skateway.” -- Neil Saravanamuttoo, co-lead of Parkways for People

[Reimagining Queen Elizabeth Driveway](#) represents an opportunity for Ottawa-Gatineau to reclaim parkways and transform public spaces for people, as many cities around the world have successfully done since 2020.

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