

Tobi Nussbaum
Chief Executive Officer
National Capital Commission

November 18, 2022

Dear Mr. Nussbaum,

We are writing to convey our appreciation for the efforts that the NCC has made to rethink the parkways as spaces for people over the past three years and to share our ideas for next year's parkways program.

Our proposals are designed to build on the success of the past year, advance the NCC's mandate to transform parkways corridors as linear green spaces and places for people,¹ and align with the approved City of Ottawa Official Plan which calls for the reimagining of the parkways in favour of active transportation and greenspace². To those ends, we offer the following priorities for consideration for 2023:

1) Convert the Queen Elizabeth Driveway (QED) active transportation pilot project into a regular program, and incorporate an enhanced shuttle service for Lansdowne events.

The QED pilot has been ongoing for three summers and has proven to be a hugely successful project. Over the 2022 season, the QED roadway was visited by 126,200 active users, and the elimination of motor vehicle traffic allowed more people to use the adjacent greenspaces for recreation and rejuvenation. We would advocate that the active use program on QED be established as an annual permanent program, running the full-length of the parkway.

We would also encourage the addition of a more robust shuttle service for Lansdowne event days in lieu of allowing private motor vehicles on QED. We believe that the active transportation program for QED can co-exist with a slow-moving shuttle service, similar to the arrangement in Gatineau Park, by adding in additional shuttles for enhanced frequency and capacity. A similar shuttle strategy could be used for the Tulip Festival as well and other Dow's Lake events. Given that the shuttle service would represent a change and restrict private vehicle access on QED during event days, we believe a robust communications strategy to raise awareness of the shuttle program and promote its benefits would be critical to its success.

¹ [The Plan for Canada's Capital 2017-67](#), National Capital Commission, p.53.

² [Ottawa Official Plan](#), Volume 1 Official Plan - Tracked, s. 6.6.2.2 f), p. 192

The active use aspect is only part of what makes the car-free QED parkway program special. There remains tremendous opportunity to enhance the use of its surrounding greenspaces that have been made safer, quieter, healthier and thereby more inviting. We support the addition of more Muskoka chairs in various locations along QED to support the transformation of QED as a park and promenade and a place for people to linger and connect with community. We would also suggest engaging local community associations to help elaborate and implement how those car-free greenspaces could be better reimagined as spaces for people.

2) Reinstigate Colonel By Drive as part of Weekend Bike Days.

We ask that you consider reinstating Colonel By Drive in the Weekend Bikedays schedule in 2023 alongside QED. The opening of QED to people should not come at the expense of another open parkway program. The routes serve different neighbourhoods and connect to different parts of the core; the open QED stretch is currently much shorter; and, a program of extensive open streets could serve as a significant boost to tourism with little meaningful impact on weekend car travel.

We recognize that it may feel challenging to open both QED and Colonel By Drive for people, however the reality is that neighbouring communities and city residents have accepted Colonel By as a fixture of parkways programming for decades, which is a gain that is critically important to preserve. We note that Colonel By Drive was frequently and successfully used in recent years for races, triathlons and other events alongside an “active” QED. We see an opportunity to leverage these already-scheduled road closings for the Weekend Bike Days program by keeping Colonel By Drive open for active use by the community after the special event has concluded. Accordingly, if you are concerned about the potential public reaction to CBD closures, we encourage you to consider including Colonel By on a bi-weekly or monthly basis as part of Weekend Bike Days as a short term option, to assess the actual impact on local communities.

While we appreciate that drivers may have views on these more active uses for Colonel By Drive, we note that there will always be pressure on these parkways to become commuter routes as opposed to fulfilling their true purpose. We feel the best strategy to preserve the long term mandate of the parkways is to retain some component of active, public use.

3) Connect the Ottawa River Western Parkway, Wellington Street and Queen Elizabeth Driveway for Weekend Bike Days.

With the move to close Wellington Street to vehicles following the convoy activity in early 2022, our nation’s capital is provided with an enormous placemaking opportunity. While we understand the NCC has plans to animate the space with a new bistro, which we fully

support, it is also a tenet³ of placemaking that public space be easily accessible, continuous, and well-connected with its surroundings. We believe the natural connections to Wellington Street are the immediately adjacent parkways—QED and the Ottawa River Western Parkway.

Connecting these parkways for Weekend Bike Days would provide an opportunity to pilot different routing options through the core, and create a network that would allow car-free weekend active access to key destinations in the National Capital Region: Lebreton Flats, the Parliamentary Precinct, the UNESCO Rideau Canal, and other major attractions. The route could also enable a protected link to Gatineau and the existing bike lane along the Portage Bridge as well as the Trans Canada Trail.

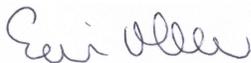
4) Explore options to improve the Gatineau Park public transit experience.

The Gatineau Park shuttle service offered in 2022 was resoundingly popular. It was shown to be a safe and effective means to provide access to a diverse group of users, through a sustainable and environmentally sound approach. We think it could be taken even further.

We would encourage the NCC to offer additional frequency in service, both in the summer season and for Fall Rhapsody. The popularity of the shuttle sometimes meant very long wait times and lineups. Increasing the frequency of service would continue to support public access to the Park by public transport, thereby diverting the car traffic which is shown to have a detrimental effect on the natural aspects of the Park and overall visitor enjoyment. Consideration could also be given to offering a more frequent and smaller zero-emission vehicle, such as an open-air electric trolley. The vehicle itself would form part of the Gatineau Park visitor experience and create more opportunities for those riding the shuttle to interact with nature.

In closing, we congratulate the NCC for a successful 2022 session and look forward to collaborating to advance the parkways for people programming in 2023.

Sincerely,



Erin Maher
Co-Lead, Parkways for People



Neil Saravanamuttoo
Co-Lead, Parkways for People

cc: Patrick Laliberté, Director, Ontario Urban Lands and Greenbelt, NCC
Catherine Verrault, Director, Quebec Urban Lands and Gatineau Park, NCC

³ [What Makes a Successful Place?](#), Project for Public Spaces.