

RIDEAU CANAL HERITAGE REPORT CARD - October 2016

By Ken W. Watson

Item	Grade	Notes
Site Management	D	In 2012, the Rideau Canal and the Trent-Severn Waterway were merged under a single management unit. It was an experiment done under the false premise of cost saving that hasn't worked. Both the Rideau and Trent-Severn are very large multi-layered canal systems, with different needs, particularly when it comes to heritage. The Rideau continues to suffer from a lack of dedicated management and improper staffing. Read more ...
Operating Canal	B	Upgraded from a C in 2014 with the addition of extra hours. But still short of 2011 (pre-cuts) hours, particularly during the summer season. Staff service continues to be generally excellent. Boats going through locks are a key component of heritage presentation of the Rideau Canal. Read more ...
Heritage Interpretation	D	Interpretation on the Rideau including physical (heritage landscapes, signage, brochures), personal (interpreters), and electronic (apps, web), is poor. The signage and brochures that are available are generally good, elevating the rank from F to D. Read more ...
Site Appearance	C	Many of the lockstations look rundown. Peeling paint, excessive vegetation growth, spalling concrete and other issues serve to detract from the visitor experience at many lockstation. At the other end of the spectrum, some of recent restoration work has been done with a very modern appearance, degrading the heritage landscapes at those lockstation (and contravening Parks Canada's own Commemorative Integrity policies). Read more ...
Maintaining Heritage Structures	B+	Upgraded from a D in May 2016 with the announcement of \$57 million (over 4 years) in additional infrastructure funding (on top of the \$46 million announced in 2015). Upgraded again to B+ in August 2016 with clarification by Parks Canada about all the projects being done (which weren't initially listed in public releases). No "A" because: a) Not all Deferred Work is being done (i.e. Davis Lock), b) Parks Canada's Commemorative Integrity policies for heritage landscapes are not always being followed and c) The Rideau Canal still does not have sustainable capital funding as part of its base budget. Read more ...

Heritage Landscape Protection	D+	There are two components to this, the heritage landscapes of the lockstations (a Parks Canada Commemorative Integrity requirement) and the visual character of the entire Rideau Canal (a UNESCO World Heritage Site recommendation). The rank of D+ is a combination of a C for heritage landscapes but a D- when it comes to the identification and protection of the visual values of the canal. Read more ...
Public Engagement	C	Upgraded in 2016 from an F since efforts (by 1 individual) are now being made to consult (in a true sense) with the public at large. Since 2010, Parks Canada has not consulted with the heritage public on anything it does on the canal. This was a change from the 1990s and early 2000s when it did a very good job at public consultation. However, there are still no formal mechanisms for meaningful public consultation. Read more ...
Public Education	F	Public Education is a key policy component of Parks Canada's Commemorative Integrity of the site and also a significant requirement Parks Canada's management of the site as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, essentially no educational or heritage awareness programs about the Rideau Canal are being done. Read more ...
Research & Archaeology	F	Parks Canada does not do any heritage research or archaeology (as opposed to the 70s and 80s when much was done). In 2012 they surplus (fired/let go) much of their heritage and archaeological staff (for the entire organization). They also shut down (removed) two local Parks Canada Rideau Canal libraries that aided local researchers. There remains a lot to do on the Rideau Canal, sites such as Jones Falls have had no significant archaeological work ever done on them. Read more ...
<p>OVERALL - Parks Canada scores a solid D+ (a score of 2.6 out of 5) when it comes to the heritage management of the Rideau Canal. It's part of their core mandate that they've been completely ignoring since 2012 (and partially ignoring since 1995). Parks Canada's stated focus is on revenue generation ("<i>we are focusing on increasing revenue</i>" - Jewel Cunningham, Director, Ontario Waterways, April 2015) part of the past government's philosophy of retailing Canada's heritage, something apparently being sanctioned by the present government since no changes have been made to have Parks Canada follow their own legislated mandate.</p>		

For more information see: www.SaveOurRideau.ca

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