

About National Capital Commission Lands

September 2006

Table of Contents

<i>History</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Creation of the National Interest Land Mass</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Implementing the National Interest Land Mass.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>The Situation in 2006.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>NCC Planning and Changes in NILM Status</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Process for Disposal of Surplus Lands</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>8</i>

ABOUT NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION LANDS

The purpose of this document is to provide additional information on the National Capital Commission's (NCC) land base, in terms of:

- “mandate lands” (also known as the National Interest Land Mass) that the NCC is entitled to hold on behalf of all Canadians for the purposes of “building” the Capital; and
- non-mandate lands, or “non-National Interest”, NCC lands that are no longer relevant to the Capital mandate.

History

The history of land acquisition in support of “building” the Capital goes back to the construction of the Parliament Buildings in the pre-Confederation days of the 1860s. The creation of the Ottawa Improvement Commission (OIC) in 1899 launched an initial period of land acquisition to improve the setting of the Capital through the creation of parks and parkways close to Ottawa's downtown, and to “cleanup” the banks of the Rideau Canal. Over the following 50 years, the OIC and its successor, the Federal District Commission (FDC), continued to acquire land. These acquisitions created more parks, Island Park Drive, and Gatineau Park.

The completion of the 1950 *Plan for the National Capital*, popularly known as the Gréber Plan (after its author, French architect-planner Jacques Gréber) was the most significant event affecting federal land acquisition in the Capital. The implementation of this plan spawned a major period of land acquisition by the federal government in the 1950s and 1960s, much by the National Capital Commission, created in 1958 as the successor to the FDC. Lands were acquired for:

- the creation of the Greenbelt,
- a major expansion of Gatineau Park,
- the construction of federal office complexes,
- the relocation of the railroad,
- the protection of the shoreline,
- the development of parkway corridors, parks, and roadways such as the Queensway (Ottawa) and Highway 5 (Gatineau).

In spite of the massive effort to implement the Gréber Plan, several proposals for which land had been acquired – such as several parkways, roadways, and bridges – never made it off the drawing boards. Moreover, other proposals were modified following land acquisition. The Ottawa Train Station is one example of the latter case; it was built closer to downtown than the originally-envisioned location at the end of the Alta Vista corridor in southeast Ottawa.

By the mid-1980s, the federal government became increasingly concerned with the size of the federal debt and annual deficits. The Nielsen Task Force was struck in 1985 to focus on the streamlining of government, and to identify ways of generating revenue to reduce the federal deficit. The NCC, like other federal departments and agencies, was reviewed and was directed to rationalize its landholdings. A moratorium on land acquisition by the NCC was put into place.

Creation of the National Interest Land Mass

The Nielsen Task Force generated two major changes for the NCC. The first was a renewal of the NCC mandate, one that added the “animation” aspect of the Capital to the NCC’s traditional planning and development role. The second change was the concept of “lands of national interest” – that is, lands required for the long-term to support the unique functions of the Capital. The “National Interest Land Mass” – or NILM – incorporated much of the legacy of past land assembly by the NCC and its predecessors. It included national shrines, river and canal banks, the ceremonial route (Confederation Boulevard), the parkway network, the Greenbelt, and Gatineau Park.

The NILM concept – which remains in place today – was developed in conjunction with (and in 1988 was approved by) the Treasury Board. Contained within the NILM were certain lands determined to be of importance to the Capital that were owned by other federal agencies, such as lands in the Greenbelt. The NILM also included lands not in federal ownership that were considered essential to the long-term future of the Capital, and which should eventually be acquired.

It is important to note that the NILM designation does not denote land use – NCC and other federal land use plans indicate the range of permitted uses within the NILM. The 1988 *Federal Land Use Plan* (FLUP), developed in tandem with the NILM, is the policy document that assigned the roles and uses for the various lands within the NILM. With the NILM and the FLUP, the NCC was assigned responsibility for managing the federal government’s long-term vision for the Capital, and for ensuring the proper stewardship of federal lands.

Implementing the National Interest Land Mass

On the basis of the 1988 Treasury Board NILM approval, the NCC was directed to rationalize its land portfolio. This meant, firstly, to keep NILM lands already in NCC ownership and acquire and consolidate non-federal lands identified as part of the NILM.

Secondly, the NCC was directed to divest lands identified as non-NILM – in other words, NCC-owned lands that were no longer relevant to the Capital mandate. In 1988, non-NILM lands included several defunct parkway corridors that were not part of the FLUP vision for the Capital; these included the Alta Vista, Eastern and Southern corridors in Ottawa, and the Champlain Corridor in the Outaouais. Also included as non-NILM lands were potential sites for embassies. Some non-NILM lands were to be held by the NCC in support of future municipal requirements, such as certain corridors originally intended for federal parkways but now identified by the (then) Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton as municipal transportation corridors. Lands were also to be held for future municipal snow dumps.

In 1990, the Treasury Board approved the NCC “Acquisition and Disposal” Strategy. This strategy provided a framework by which the NCC was to achieve the NILM configuration set out in the 1988 Treasury Board decision. The strategy indicated the mechanisms for consolidating federal ownership of the NILM, and for undertaking land disposals – namely, that revenues from the disposal of non-mandate lands were to be

directed to NILM acquisitions. This “self-funding” approach would allow the NCC, over time, to complete ownership of the NILM. Approval of the 1990 strategy resulted in a lifting of the moratorium on land acquisitions by the NCC.

In 1990, the NCC also undertook a separate Real Asset Management Strategy. This strategy revealed a major shortfall in funding to maintain and rehabilitate the physical assets managed by the NCC, a broad portfolio that includes hundreds of buildings, many bridges, parkways, and pathways, and other myriad assets. In order to help fund the continued management of these assets, Treasury Board directed the NCC, in 1992, to use revenues from land disposals to support the life-cycle management of capital assets, in addition to the acquisition of NILM lands. This requirement to partially fund capital asset management from land sales revenue continues today.

From 1996 to 1998, the NCC completed a number of major planning exercises that generated refinements to the limits of the 1988 NILM. Included were the 1996 Greenbelt Master Plan, the 1998 revision of the Gatineau Park boundary, and the 1999 Plan for Canada’s Capital (an update of the 1988 Federal Land Use Plan). These refinements generated additions to the NILM as well as removals from the NILM. Other minor adjustments to the NILM were made in response to unanticipated situations. One example is the 1998 exchange of lands in the Clearview Street area adjacent to the Ottawa River Parkway just east of Island Park Drive. Here, private land zoned for development but situated close to the Parkway was transferred to the NCC and rezoned to open space; NCC lands abutting Clearview Street far from the Parkway were transferred to a developer and rezoned for development. This transfer, which created a better buffer for the Ottawa River Parkway, involved extensive public input and the use of the municipal planning process.

The implementation of the various strategies to consolidate the National Interest Land Mass has involved land acquisitions and land disposals.

Acquisitions from 1989 to September 2006

Open Space Protection: 2,470 ha

- From private sector (for natural land protection) (911 ha)
- From public sector (1,559 ha)

Development: 7 ha

- Residential – commercial (7 ha)

Total Acquisitions: 2,477 ha

Transfers from 1989 to September 2006

Open Space: 330 ha

- Private Sector for outdoor recreation (161 ha)
- Municipalities for open space / recreational purposes (169 ha)

Development: 404 ha

- Other countries for embassies (1.5 ha)
- Municipalities for them to develop (105 ha)
- Other federal departments (including museums) (10 ha)
- Private Sector for development (287 ha)

Public Infrastructure: 715 ha

- Hydro, storm water management, snow dumps, etc. (177 ha)
- Municipalities for transit/park and rides (75 ha)
- Provinces and municipalities for roads (429 ha)
- Public sector institutions (schools, churches, etc.) (34 ha)

Total Transfers: 1,449 ha

Net addition to NCC Portfolio from 1989-2006: 1,028 ha

Large acquisitions within the 2,477 hectares acquired by the NCC include several hundred hectares in each of Mer Bleue and the Meech Creek Valley, one-half of the former Agriculture Canada Greenbelt Research Farm, Rockcliffe Park (acquired from the City of Ottawa), and, in 2003, the acquisition of the strategically-located Scott Paper site across from Parliament Hill.

The Situation in 2006

The planning process continues in order for NCC land ownership to better correspond with the NILM. Lands remain to be acquired, such as in the Mer Bleue Bog, in the Greenbelt and in Gatineau Park. Some non-NILM lands also remain in NCC ownership. Today, almost 97% of the total NCC land ownership of ±47,300 hectares falls into the NILM category. The following maps illustrate NCC land ownership in 2006.

1. Urban Lands
(NILM and non-NILM lands)
2. Non-Urban Lands - Ontario
(NILM and non-NILM lands)
3. Non-Urban Lands - Québec
(NILM and non-NILM lands)

On many non-NILM lands, the NCC does not expect to see changes in land use from today's uses. This is especially evident on the Urban Lands map. Examples include:

Urban Lands

- Recreation (e.g., Mooney's Bay);
- Urban Natural Feature (e.g., McCarthy Woods); and
- Transportation (e.g., Highway 5 (Gatineau), Ottawa Transitway)

Non-Urban Lands - Ontario

- Open space (e.g., Innes Rd. by-pass lands);

In other non-NILM areas, future planning is required to determine the range of ultimate uses. The above maps provide additional details on these areas.

NCC Planning and Changes in NILM Status

As described earlier, following the completion of the master plans for Gatineau Park and the Greenbelt, additions to and removals from the NILM have occurred since the creation of the NILM in 1988. The Urban Lands area of the Capital does not yet have a comprehensive master plan to match those that exist for the Greenbelt and Gatineau Park. As such, refinements in the form of additions to and/or removals from the NILM may be generated by the development of a master plan for this area. Any changes in NILM status would be instituted at the end of the master plan process. As with the master plans for the Greenbelt and Gatineau Park, public consultation will be an integral part of the Urban Lands planning process.

Process for Disposal of Surplus Lands

The process of disposing of non-NILM lands involves a great deal of effort and consultation, within the NCC, with municipalities, and with the public. A review of non-NILM properties can reveal a potential municipal interest or requirement, such as future transport infrastructure. Large parcels of land are typically subjected to a comprehensive planning process, and where municipal approvals for Official Plan amendments, rezoning, etc. are required, these sites undergo the municipal consultation/hearing process. Individual, small parcels can sometimes be put on the market directly, depending on the range of uses permitted by the municipalities. In such cases, adjacent communities are informed of the intent to dispose.

In disposing of non-mandate lands, the NCC adheres to a number of principles to ensure that the public interest is served. These principles, enunciated in the 1999 *Plan for Canada's Capital* (PFCC), comprise the following:

- Maximize benefit to federal government objectives (e.g., further accomplishment of the PFCC, asset exchange with other governments, etc.)
- The presence of Valued Ecosystem Components
- Corridors required to implement the Capital Pathway Network
- Federal and NCC policies (e.g., Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation, environmental assessment, heritage, archaeology), and

- Regional and municipal planning policies and planning processes, including public consultations, where a change in land use is contemplated.

Conclusion

The NCC land base has evolved, from the early days of the Ottawa Improvement Commission when the land base was almost non-existent, to the height of the 1970s when the acquisitions identified in the 1950 Gréber Plan were mostly complete, to the days of government restraint and NCC mandate refinements.

This evolution will continue, yet the vast majority of the NCC's land base will remain unchanged. Some adjustments will continue to occur – in the form of land acquisitions and disposals – in response to continually changing land use and planning environments, the requirements of other governments, and the needs of the future Capital.

(September 2006)