



Minister's Round Table on Parks Canada

2014



Building Urban to Arctic Connections



Parks
Canada

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INTRODUCTION

On June 2, 2014, The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Canada's Minister of the Environment and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, hosted the seventh *Minister's Round Table* (MRT) on Parks Canada in Ottawa, Ontario. This MRT, which focused on Canada's North, included twenty stakeholders whose perspectives represented a broad range of northern interests, such as tourism, education, arts and culture, conservation, and economic development, as well as representatives from Inuit and other Aboriginal organizations, other levels of government, and the not-for-profit, public, and private sectors. The MRT was structured as a one-day facilitated discussion designed to seek participants' ideas and input on two topics related to the overarching theme of "*Building Urban to Arctic Connections.*"

The two discussion topics, "*Connecting Urban Canadians to Arctic places: Tourism and Traditional Economy,*" and "*Connecting the North to Urban Centres through Stories and Gateways,*" reflect the interconnectedness of Parks Canada's commitments to reaching Canadians where they live, work, and play and to celebrating the natural and cultural heritage of the North as an integral element of our national identity. These discussions also represent one of the many actions Parks Canada is taking to connect Canadians to nature in support of the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan.

Participants in the MRT were asked to consider the following questions:

1. How can we collectively increase visitation in Parks Canada places in the North and provide a fuller experience of its unique culture in ways that strengthen the traditional economy?
2. How can we collectively better connect urban Canadians with Parks Canada places in the North?

Many ideas were put forward during the discussions. The input of participants has been regrouped under three recommendations, which are detailed below, along with Minister Aglukkaq's responses to these recommendations.





Recommendations from the Group

Recommendation #1:

Streamlining the Permitting Process for Northern Canada Tourism

Participants highlighted the importance of improving collaboration between Parks Canada, other levels of government, and local communities in order to reduce red tape and regulatory barriers to make it easier for the cruise ship industry, among others, to operate and bring visitors into national parks in the North.

Minister's Response:

The Minister will continue to streamline the permitting process for the two federal departments in her portfolio, including requirements for national parks managed by Parks Canada and national wildlife areas and migratory bird sanctuaries managed by Environment Canada.

Steps have already been undertaken toward this recommendation; for example, Parks Canada has streamlined its permitting process for national parks in Nunavut, reducing the requirements by over 50 percent. This will benefit not only the cruise ship industry, but also Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement beneficiaries who are interested in establishing guiding and outfitting businesses.

The Minister will raise the issue of permitting in Canada's North with the interdepartmental committee on Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy

Moving forward, where the lands in Nunavut are both a national park and national wildlife area with two separate management structures (e.g., Sirmilik National Park and Bylot Island National Wildlife Area), Environment Canada and Parks Canada will work together to create a single window permit application process, and will coordinate internal reviews to provide joint responses to permit applications.

Moreover, where cruise ships are interested in multiple destinations, including national parks, national historic sites, national wildlife areas, or migratory bird sanctuaries, the respective Parks Canada and Environment Canada authorities will coordinate the internal permit review to provide a joint response to all lands identified in the permit application.



Parks Canada will also continue its collaborative work with Environment Canada and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) to develop integrated ecotourism priorities for the North, including collaborative proposals to streamline planning and funding, and ensuring that funding and projects are coordinated for the benefit of northern communities and visitors to the North.

The Minister's leadership role on the Arctic Council will also complement Parks Canada's work. The Council's Arctic Marine Tourism Project aims to strengthen and promote Arctic marine tourism in a way that maximizes socio-cultural, environmental and economic benefits for residents of the Arctic.

And finally, the Minister will raise the issue of permitting in Canada's North with the interdepartmental committee on Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy to discuss a coordinated federal response to this concern, given its important impact on northern tourism.



Recommendation #2:

Improved Access to Northern Parks and Economic Benefits for Northern Communities

Participants recommended that Parks Canada consider developing and marketing a select number of iconic experiences in Parks Canada's northern national parks in a way that maximizes tangible benefits to local communities.

Minister's Response:

Parks Canada is working with partners to implement a "Northern Iconic Experiences" strategy to promote the magic of the North's "white spaces" and to deliver guided once-in-a-lifetime experiences to help unleash local economic benefits from surrounding national parks and national historic sites.

Newly developed packaged tours will offer improved access by chartered flights, along with accommodation, meals, and cultural and/or research experiences

Twelve of the fourteen national parks in Canada's North are not accessible by automobile. Newly developed packaged tours will offer improved access by chartered flights, along with accommodation, meals, and cultural and/or research experiences. This will attract new audiences, facilitate the trip planning experience for visitors, and improve the ability of local communities to participate in and benefit from these tourism initiatives. Each of these Northern Iconic Experiences, lasting from a few days to a few weeks, will cater to specific markets, ranging from adventure tourism to cultural tourism.



Photo Courtesy of Canadian Tourism Commission



Photo Courtesy of Canadian Tourism Commission

The Northern Iconic Experiences will be developed and delivered using a broad range of partnership arrangements. This includes working with other federal government entities, local communities, and Aboriginal organizations, with regional, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as the private sector.

Through its promotion of these signature northern packaged tours, Parks Canada will work year-round to raise awareness of the North, its cultures, its peoples, and its landscapes. Where and when possible, promotional efforts will be harmonized with provincial and territorial efforts. The Agency will also continue to support other ways of bringing the North to Canadians throughout the year through outreach programs in major urban centres.

Recommendation #3:

Connecting Urban Audiences to the North

In order to bring the spirit of Parks Canada's northern places to Canadians more effectively, creative marketing tools and strategies should be developed.

Minister's Response:

Parks Canada will amplify its reach into urban areas through its work with partners and its presence at popular partner venues, increasing Canadians' awareness of and desire to visit Parks Canada northern places. Parks Canada will also feature several northern national parks on Google Streetview (data collection is scheduled this year for Ivavik, Torngat Mountains, Auyuittuq, Tuktot Nogait and Wood Buffalo National Parks) and will pursue broadcast and earned media opportunities that showcase iconic northern national park experiences.



The Agency will work in partnership with the *Students on Ice* program to provide exchange opportunities for youth to work in northern national parks and will explore and activate ways for these youth leaders to share their experiences with their peers. Efforts will also be made to leverage Parks Canada's Duke and Duchess of Cambridge Youth Ambassador social media channels, and the ambassadors' personal networks.

Rouge National Urban Park will also act as an introduction for urban Canadians to learn about and discover Parks Canada's vast network of protected areas, including 44 national parks, 167 national historic sites and four national marine conservation areas. Through interactive presentations, innovative displays, exhibits and other outreach and engagement activities, Rouge National Urban Park will aim to make Parks Canada's more remote locations, particularly those in Canada's North, more accessible to urban residents, bridging the gaps that result from our country's vast geography and diverse cultural makeup.

Conclusion

The discussions and recommendations of the 2014 MRT provided advice to Parks Canada on strategies and actions it may pursue to increase visitation in Parks Canada places in the North, and provide a fuller experience of its unique culture in ways that strengthen the traditional economy. The recommendations also provide advice on ways to better connect urban Canadians with Parks Canada places in the North.

Each of the recommendations and responses focuses on collaboration and collective action, which are essential to the successful promotion of Canada's spectacular northern national parks and national historic sites. Moving forward



Photo Courtesy of Canadian Tourism Commission

with the participants' recommendations, Parks Canada will endeavour to work more closely with its partners within the federal government as well as with other levels of government, with Aboriginal communities across the North, and with the travel and tourism industry to promote and facilitate access to our northern treasured places.

Through this work, Parks Canada will continue to celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of the North and its central and vital place in our country's history, present and future. In so doing, the Agency will contribute to fulfilling the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan goals of conserving and restoring our lands and waters and connecting Canadian families to our natural spaces.

Photo Courtesy of Canadian Tourism Commission

