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Signal Hill

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

2018



2018

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SIGNAL HILL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2018

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FOREWORD



Canada's national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas belong to all Canadians and offer truly Canadian experiences.

These special places make up one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and cultural heritage areas in the world.

The Government is committed to preserving our natural and cultural heritage, expanding the system of protected places and contributing to the recovery of species-at-risk. At the same time, we must continue to offer new and innovative visitor and outreach programs and activities so that more Canadians can experience Parks Canada places and learn about our environment, history and culture.

This new management plan for Signal Hill National Historic Site of Canada supports this vision.

Management plans are developed through extensive consultation and input from various people and organizations, including Indigenous peoples, local and regional residents, visitors and the dedicated team at Parks Canada.

National parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas are a priority for the Government of Canada. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this plan for their commitment and spirit of co-operation.

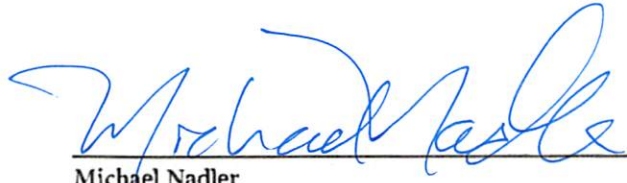
As the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, I applaud this collaborative effort and I am pleased to approve the Signal Hill National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C McKenna', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

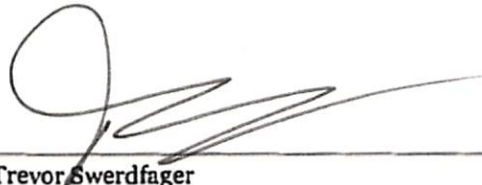
Catherine McKenna
*Minister of Environment and Climate Change and
Minister responsible for Parks Canada*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended by:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Signal Hill National Historic Site is one of Canada's most iconic, treasured and visited historic sites. The site's national historic status is due to Signal Hill's vital importance to Canada's defence and communications history. Guarding the "Narrows," the entrance to St. John's harbour, and overlooking the city of St. John's, Signal Hill has historically played a dual role both as a military shield and a communications gateway. While Signal Hill protected St. John's from military attack, it also played a vital communications role, linking St. John's to merchant shipping through flag signalling and linking North America to Europe through transatlantic cable and wireless telecommunication.

First opened as a National Historic "Park" in 1958, Signal Hill National Historic Site continues to welcome the world and receives approximately 750,000 visitors annually. The site boasts panoramic views, spectacular hiking, immersive history experiences, unique cultural landscapes, and modern visitor facilities. As the steward and manager of this treasured historic site, Parks Canada is responsible for protecting Signal Hill National Historic Site's cultural and natural resources and telling the site's fascinating story.

This management plan replaces the 2007 management plan and outlines the key objectives that Parks Canada intends to achieve over the next 10 years:

1. Continued protection of the site's cultural resources and their heritage values through effective cultural resource management practices.
2. Heightened national and international profile through strategic promotions, partnering and outreach activities.
3. An improved visitor experience offer featuring more collaboration with Indigenous peoples and the creation of innovative, audience-specific visitor experience products.
4. Strengthened relationships with Indigenous peoples, partners, stakeholders, and local residents through increased public engagement opportunities.

Throughout the life of this management plan, Parks Canada will continue to engage Indigenous peoples and work closely with partners and stakeholders to achieve these objectives towards ensuring the continued, effective management of Signal Hill National Historic Site.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Parks Canada manages one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. The Agency's mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national park, national marine conservation area, heritage canal and those national historic sites administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency's vision:

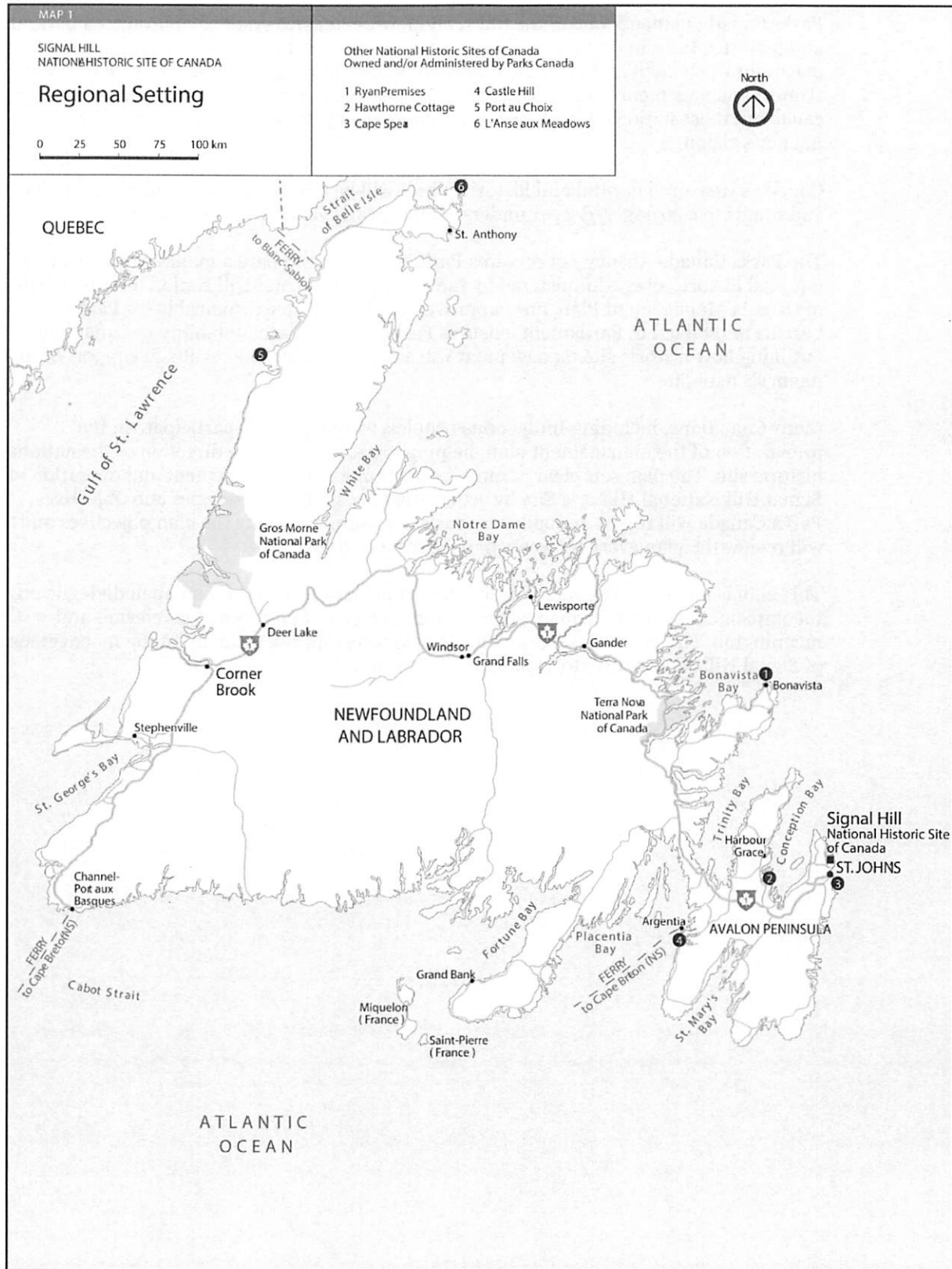
Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

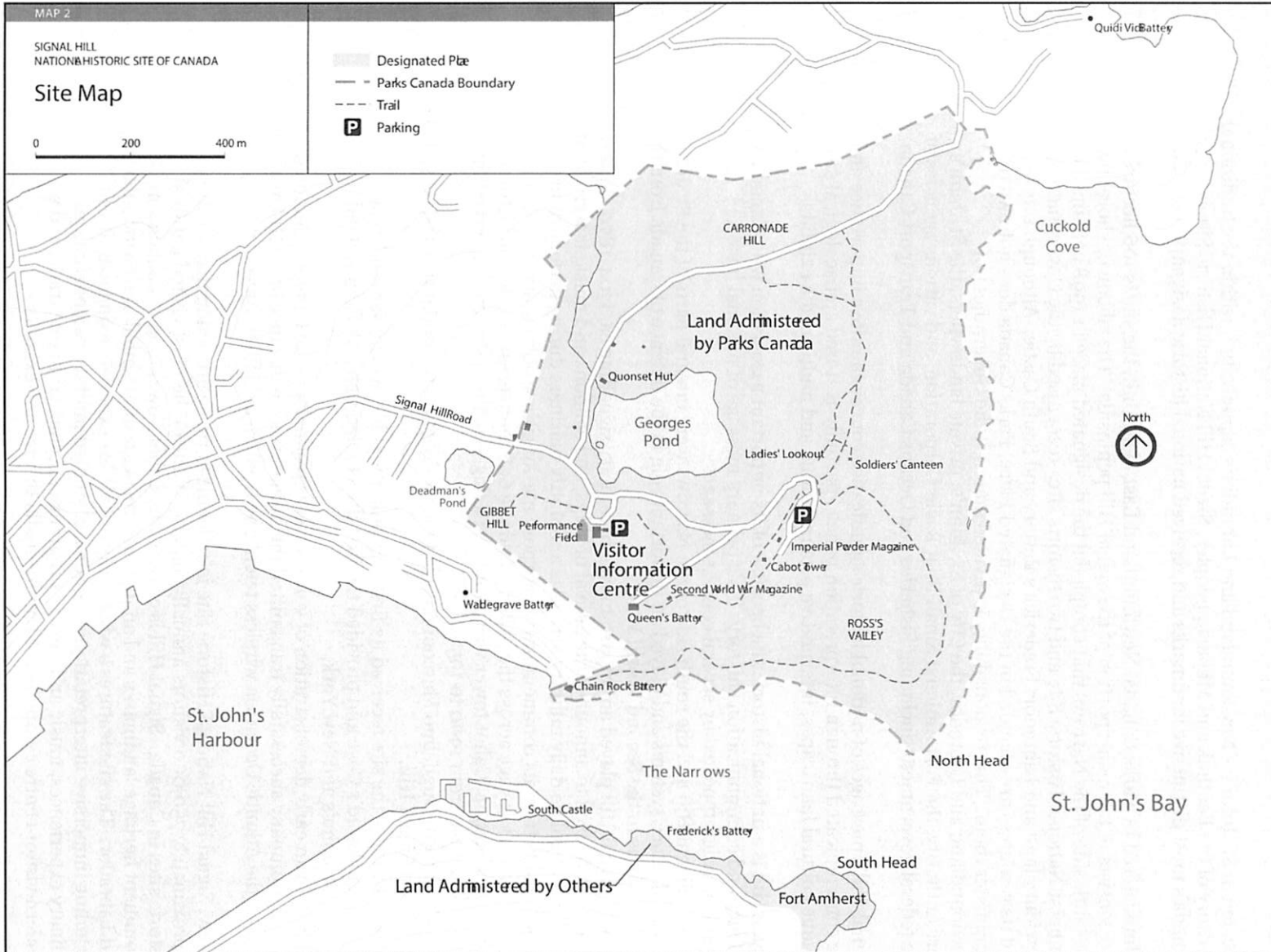
The Parks Canada Agency Act requires Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for national historic sites administered by the Agency. The Signal Hill National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how historic site management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

Many Canadians, including Indigenous peoples, were invited to participate in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national historic site. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Signal Hill National Historic Site by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement on the management of Signal Hill National Historic Site in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting





Map 2: Signal Hill National Historic Site

2.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF SIGNAL HILL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Located in St. John's – Newfoundland and Labrador's capital city – within the traditional territory of the Beothuk and Mi'kmaq peoples, Signal Hill National Historic Site is one of Canada's most distinctive landmarks and received national historic designation in 1951.

Administered by Parks Canada, Newfoundland East Field Unit, the site is 106 hectares and consists of the major portion of the Signal Hill peninsula. The ribbon of shoreline on the south side of the Narrows that completed the designated place in 1998 contains Fort Amherst National Historic Site and two historic sites recognised by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador: Frederick's Battery and South Castle. Although this land and its resources are included in the Designated Place, Parks Canada does not own or administer them. This responsibility is divided amongst the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the City of St. John's, private landowners, the St. John's Port Authority, the Fort Amherst Small Boat Basin Corporation, and various agencies of the federal government, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Transport Canada.

Signal Hill's messages of national historic significance convey the site's importance and are communicated through interpretation panels, partially-restored archaeological sites, unique cultural landscapes, interpretive programming, and multi-media exhibits.

Signal Hill is a national historic site because of its important association with Canada's defence and communications history. This primary message of national historic significance is supported by several context messages:

- Signal Hill and the south side of the Narrows were integral parts of the St. John's defence systems and played an important role in the defence of Canada from the 1640s to the Second World War.
- Signal Hill played an important role in military signalling ca. 1704-1870. Flags were used to announce the arrival of ships, and cannons and muskets were fired to regulate daily military activities and notify mariners during periods of fog.
- Aside from its commemorative purpose marking the 400th anniversary of John Cabot's voyage across the Atlantic and the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria's coronation, Cabot tower was built to be a flag-signalling station and served that function from 1900 to 1958.
- In 1901, Guglielmo Marconi received the world's first transatlantic wireless signal on Signal Hill.
- In 1909, the site received its first transatlantic cable, which was landed at Cuckhold's Cove and provided the first direct telegraph link from Ireland to St. John's and New York.
- In an early demonstration of voice wireless technology, the Canadian Marconi Company successfully transmitted the human voice a distance of 1,200 km across the Atlantic Ocean via wireless telephone from Signal Hill in 1920.

Today, Signal Hill National Historic Site is an iconic heritage attraction that receives approximately 750,000 visitors annually, making it one of the most visited national historic sites in Canada. Signal Hill is crowned by Cabot Tower, one of Canada's most prominent heritage landmarks and an instantly recognizable symbol of Newfoundland and Labrador. The site features a wide variety of visitor experience opportunities, including immersive interpretation programs, costumed military demonstrations, culinary experiences, music and theatre programs, spectacular hiking trails, and a modern visitor centre complete with multi-media theatre and exhibits.

The richness of Signal Hill National Historic Site's history is matched by its incredible natural features and rugged beauty. Although located within an urban setting and

adjacent to the downtown core of St. John's, Signal Hill National Historic Site is truly a world apart, providing visitors with spectacular hiking experiences atop exposed ocean headlands, along centuries-old footpaths, and through forested areas. Given the breadth and variety of its natural landscapes, Signal Hill National Historic Site offers an authentic "park" experience in an urban setting, making it an attractive option for local urban residents who wish to connect with nature and culture in a Parks Canada place but may not have the opportunity to visit a national park.

3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

Signal Hill National Historic Site enjoys a prominent public profile, both locally and nationally. The site is cherished by local residents and marvelled at by visitors. Visible to all in the St. John's area, Signal Hill is never far away from the public eye and is often featured in both traditional and new media channels. Recent visitor experience initiatives stemming from the previous Signal Hill National Historic Site Management Plan – particularly in visitor experience product development, promotions, partnering and new media /social media – have strengthened connections between the site and key audiences. In addition, Signal Hill National Historic Site has played a significant role in recent Government of Canada priority initiatives, such as War of 1812 commemorations, Road to 2017 activities, World Wars commemoration projects, and Canada 150 celebrations. Building on Signal Hill's prominence and growing contribution to national initiatives, there are opportunities for the Parks Canada Agency to benefit more from Signal Hill's high profile as a national icon and its current and potential connections to priority audience segments.

Specific achievements stemming from the previous Signal Hill National Historic Site management plan (2007) include:

- A refurbished visitor centre featuring a multi-media theatre, exhibits, and café.
- Archaeological excavations completed in the Chain Rock area, along The Narrows.
- Significant repair, conservation and historical restoration work completed at Cabot Tower.
- Extensive upgrades to the Visitor Center Annex to create a new hospitality service-offer, providing revenue-generation opportunities.
- Significant repairs to the reconstructed Queen's Battery Barracks.
- Re-routing of Signal Hill Road and the installation of sidewalks for improved public safety.
- Renewal of the Signal Hill Tattoo performance field, including landscaping and the installation of a new viewing area.
- Repair and repaving of the summit parking area and the installation of new walkways.
- Significant upgrades to all trails, including the North Head, Ladies' Lookout, and Gibbet Hill trails.
- Continued strong collaborative relationships with key onsite partners, including the Signal Hill Tattoo, the Society of Newfoundland Radio Amateurs, and the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, to achieve shared strategic objectives and expand the presentation of the full scope of Signal Hill's military and communications history.
- Dynamic social media presence for Signal Hill National Historic Site, through Facebook, YouTube and Twitter social media platforms.
- Improved visitor experience through renewed on-site directional and interpretation signage, particularly at the North Head and Ladies' Lookout Trails

- New collaborative relationships within the tourism and service sectors to encourage increased visitation and new visitor experience offers.
- Renewal of on-site interpretive programs with a focus on immersive, interactive, and multi-sensory experiences.
- Significant increase in overall paid visitation and participation in revenue-generating visitor experience programs.

Overall capital investment in facilities, infrastructure, visitor experience programs and non-personal media since the previous management plan totals approximately \$15 million.

This management plan outlines how Parks Canada seeks to build upon achievements realized since the previous management plan, particularly in terms of pursuing more opportunities for partnering and engagement, reaching out to new market segments, further enhancing the visitor experience offer, and continuing to ensure the protection of the site's cultural and natural resources. Based on what has been accomplished since the 2007 management plan, combined with current management practices and direction, Signal Hill National Historic Site is well positioned to achieve success in all of these areas moving forward.

Any anticipated achievements must be considered alongside the significant challenge that Signal Hill National Historic Site receives a high number of annual visitors (approximately 750,000) but relatively little paid visitation (approximately 12,000 annually), thereby generating minimal revenue to invest in visitor facilities, services, and assets. Visitors to the site are not required to pay an entry fee unless they enter the Visitor Centre or Queen's Battery Barracks, visit the site as part of a commercial tour, or participate in a fee-based special event or program. By developing new fee-based visitor experience programming, enhancing the food service offer at the Visitor Centre café, and increasing commercial tour fee compliance, we have begun to create new revenue generation opportunities to support our continued high quality visitor services, facilities, and assets.

These efforts will be further enhanced by revenue-generation opportunities linked to the newly-renovated Signal Hill Visitor Centre Annex. The Annex is a multi-purpose facility, attached to the Visitor Centre, with capacity for 100+ people. Featuring spectacular views of St. John's harbour and the summit of Signal Hill, the Annex is used for a variety of public events in addition to its primary use as a training space for the Signal Hill Tattoo. The Annex has recently undergone significant renovations and now features a fully-equipped commercial kitchen, new washroom facilities, and a large outdoor deck. With these improvements the Annex is ideally equipped to host a wider variety of private and public functions.

The Annex improvements come at an opportune time. Memorial University of Newfoundland is in the process of renovating the former Battery Hotel, adjacent to Signal Hill National Historic Site, to become a multi-purpose facility and conference centre. The combination of this facility alongside the newly-renovated facilities at Signal Hill National Historic Site as well as the Johnson Geo Centre creates opportunities for the three institutions to jointly serve the convention/conference sector, which should continue to see significant growth in St. John's over the coming years.

Partnering and engagement activities for Signal Hill National Historic Site are not solely focused on organizations in St. John's. The Newfoundland East Field Unit has had a memorandum of understanding with Miawpukek First Nation since 2012 and with Qalipu First Nation since 2017 to cooperate in a number of areas including employment, career development and training, tourism management, and cross-promotion. Additionally, the Newfoundland East Field Unit works with Miawpukek First Nation, Qalipu First Nation

and other Indigenous organizations in the development and delivery of visitor experience and outreach programs, as well as special events. Given Signal Hill National Historic Site's high profile and prominence, there is significant potential for the site to be a focal point for Indigenous reconciliation initiatives and activities. Through engaging our Indigenous partners in a spirit of respect and openness, we will jointly identify and pursue mutually-beneficial initiatives at Signal Hill National Historic Site.

Special events at Signal Hill National Historic Site, such as the annual Canada Day sunrise event, consistently bring hundreds of visitors and nation-wide attention to the site. To build on Signal Hill's popularity as a venue for public gatherings, Parks Canada is considering new, high-profile events to engage both local residents and visitors from away. One such example is the inaugural Star Gala, during which we unveiled a new holiday star affixed to Cabot Tower. This event was very well attended and generated local and national media attention, building on the local population's connection to the Cabot Tower star as a decades-long holiday tradition in St. John's.

Parks Canada's focus on high-profile special events, enhanced visitor experiences, and increased public and stakeholder engagement is paired with an unwavering commitment to cultural resource protection. The most recent Commemorative Integrity Evaluation for Signal Hill National Historic Site rated archaeology sites as stable. Parks Canada continues to monitor these sites to ensure any threats to cultural resources are identified and mitigated. Concerns raised in the Commemorative Integrity Evaluation regarding damage to Cabot Tower due to water infiltration have been addressed.

4.0 VISION

In 20 years, Signal Hill National Historic Site will be a showcase site in Parks Canada's family of national historic sites and a place where Canadians feel a strong sense of connection to their shared heritage as a result of high quality visitor experiences, meaningful community engagement, and effective partnerships. The site will feature a diverse range of innovative and immersive visitor experience opportunities that tell the story of this unique place and its important role in global communications history, particularly as the reception point for the first trans-Atlantic wireless signal, and in global military history as an important military installation over three centuries and the site of the last military engagement between France and Great Britain in the Seven Years War. Parks Canada will engage Indigenous partners in Newfoundland and Labrador and, together, explore the potential to feature Indigenous culture, stories, and heritage at Signal Hill. The site's natural and cultural heritage resources will be protected, understood, valued and accessible. Signal Hill National Historic Site will continue to be one of Newfoundland and Labrador's top tourism attractions based on visitor statistics and satisfaction surveys. Local residents and Canadians across the country will feel a strong sense of connection to the site as a result of increased opportunities for public and stakeholder involvement and greater public awareness of Parks Canada's role and visitor experience offer.

5.0 KEY STRATEGIES

The planning priorities for Signal Hill National Historic Site will be achieved through a results-based management framework consisting of four (4) key strategies and associated objectives and targets designed to measure progress.

These key strategies are designed to be achievable given the current planning context. Parks Canada, working alongside our partners, stakeholders, and the public will implement these strategies in order to realize the Vision outlined above for Signal Hill National Historic Site.

Key Strategy 1: Preserve Signal Hill National Historic Site’s cultural and natural resources and their heritage values.

Parks Canada will strive to ensure that the site’s cultural resources including cultural landscapes and their associated views, buildings, archaeological sites, historical and archaeological objects, and their heritage values are not lost or impaired due to natural processes or human actions within or outside the site. Parks Canada will continue to inventory, document and monitor the site’s cultural resources, to take action when necessary to protect these resources, and will base all management decisions on adequate and sound information in accordance with Parks Canada’s Cultural Resource Management Policy.

Likewise, Signal Hill will continue to be valued for its rugged natural beauty, flora, fauna, landscapes, and expansive views of the Atlantic Ocean, the Narrows, and St. John’s. The site’s natural resources, including landscapes and their characteristic features, will be protected.

Objective: Cultural and natural resources and associated heritage values are identified, monitored and protected.

Target:

- An updated Commemorative Integrity Evaluation or equivalent assessment is completed by 2023.
- During the term of this management plan, the condition of cultural resources is rated as stable or improved through ongoing monitoring, regular maintenance and specific interventions where required.
- During the term of this management plan, an updated natural resources inventory of Signal Hill National Historic Site will be completed and the site’s landscape preservation plan will be updated.

Key Strategy 2: Enhance national profile through strategic promotions, partnering and outreach.

A focus of this strategy will be to explore opportunities to expand the national profile of Signal Hill National Historic Site within the Parks Canada family of national historic sites and increase opportunities to create meaningful connections with Canadians. We will accomplish this by pursuing new relationships with partners, including Indigenous peoples, other Parks Canada places, as well as provincial and national tourism organizations and adjacent institutions such as the Johnson GeoCentre and Memorial University. Through relationship building and maintenance, we will generate promotional, awareness, and educational opportunities and expand Signal Hill National Historic Site’s reach into new markets, such as the conference and convention sectors. In support of this, Parks Canada will continue to reach out to Canadians where they live, build on established relationships with other thematically-linked sites, particularly those within the Parks Canada family, and further increase the site’s recognition and stature.

Objective: Parks Canada strategically targets investments at Signal Hill National Historic Site to raise national profile and more effectively connect with key population groups such as Indigenous peoples, youth, Canadians in urban areas, and new Canadians, as well as target market segments.

Targets:

- More partnering arrangements (including formal partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding, and other mechanisms) bringing mutually-beneficial results to both Signal Hill National Historic Site and our partner organizations from the community, non-profit, and private sectors.
- More national and international positive media coverage (through both traditional and social media) about Signal Hill National Historic Site.
- Increased visitation and use of Signal Hill National Historic Site by underrepresented visitor segments and markets, such as young families with children, new Canadians, and the conventions, conference and cruise markets.

Key Strategy 3: Facilitate new, market-focused visitor experiences as part of a constantly improving visitor experience offer.

Parks Canada will tailor the visitor experience offer to reach specific market segments that are currently underrepresented at Signal Hill National Historic Site, such as Urban Canadians aged 18-25 and “Fledgling Families with Parents” aged 25-44. The site’s communications history, especially the internationally significant Marconi story, will be featured prominently in the overall visitor experience offer and Parks Canada will engage Indigenous partners to jointly explore opportunities for Indigenous tourism programs and activities. Lastly, Parks Canada will maintain and continue to upgrade existing trails, including the highly-visited North Head Trail, so they continue to provide unforgettable visitor experiences and meet all public safety requirements.

Objective: An enhanced visitor experience offer that engages visitors through unique, meaningful and tailored experiences highlighting the many stories of Signal Hill National Historic Site.

Targets:

- Build on existing relationships with Indigenous partners to jointly explore opportunities to feature Indigenous stories, content and activities as part of the visitor experience offer at Signal Hill National Historic Site.
- More than 90% of visitors will enjoy and are satisfied with their experience at Signal Hill National Historic Site, as demonstrated through Visitor Information Program survey reporting.
- Through effective maintenance planning and implementation, the North Head Trail and other on-site trails will continue to meet Parks Canada public safety standards.
- By 2025, paid visitation as a proportion of the number of overall visitors to Signal Hill National Historic Site will increase by 25%, to approximately 15,000 paid visits.
- By 2025, the proportion of visitors to Signal Hill National Historic Site aged 18-34 years old will increase by 20%, based on attendance surveys and Visitor Information Program reports.

Key Strategy 4: Strengthen relationships with Indigenous partners, key stakeholders, and community members.

Through fostering strategic and mutually-beneficial relationships, Parks Canada will explore opportunities to create meaningful connections between Signal Hill National Historic Site and key groups, including Indigenous peoples, new Canadians, youth, Canadians from urban centres, and francophone Canadians. In addition, Parks Canada will pursue public engagement activities to connect regularly with residents of the Signal Hill neighbourhood, including those living in the Battery and Quidi Vidi Village.

Objective: Canadians, whether living across the country or next door to the site, feel connected to Signal Hill National Historic Site. Residents of the Signal Hill neighbourhood engage with Parks Canada in the stewardship of the rich natural and cultural history protected within the site's boundaries.

Targets:

- Increased opportunities for Indigenous peoples to engage with Signal Hill National Historic Site through collaborative activities with Parks Canada and/or Indigenous-led initiatives.
- Increased opportunities for stakeholders and local residents to connect with Signal Hill National Historic Site through, for example, open houses, stakeholder groups, and social media channels.
- Continue to deliver the popular Parks Canada *Learn to Camp* program and capitalize on opportunities to collaborate with key partners and stakeholders through the program.
- Establish a volunteer program at Signal Hill National Historic Site, providing opportunities for members of the public to contribute their volunteer time to programs and activities at the site.

6.0 SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Parks Canada is responsible for assessing and mitigating the impacts of management actions on ecosystems and on cultural resources. The *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, requires a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of all plans and policies submitted to the federal Cabinet or to a Minister for approval deemed to have important positive or negative environmental effects.

A strategic environmental assessment was undertaken on this management plan, and the management direction found within has been adjusted to respond to findings. The following is a summary of the environmental assessment:

The Preliminary Scan for Strategic Environmental Assessment fulfils all Strategic environmental assessment requirements related to the Signal Hill National Historic Site Management Plan. The Preliminary Scan determined that there are no anticipated important negative effects, nor public/stakeholder interests or concerns, associated with the management measures and objectives presented in this management plan.