

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parc du Sault-des-Chats de Pontiac is an innovative, recreo-tourism development project. Situated on the banks of the Ottawa River, less than an hour's drive from the major urban centres of Gatineau and Ottawa, the site is a combination of magnificent landscapes and the traces of a rich historic past. The park straddles the municipalities of Pontiac and Bristol, and the territories of the Collines-de-l'Outaouais and Pontiac MRCs.

For several years now, local players have been seeking to develop this exceptional, but little-known site. Their efforts have led to the present development concept - the result of collaboration among seven partners (two municipalities, two MRCs, two CLDs (local development centres) and the Conférence régionale des élus de l'Outaouais (CRÉO). The concept lays the foundations for a structuring project capable of acting as a lever for development and major economic prosperity throughout the region. The creation of the park also points to a firm desire to protect the natural environments and habitats essential for the richness of the wildlife, flora and countryside. This new hub of development will be implemented by focusing on how the existing attractions and recreo-tourism services complement one another. Finally, the development of the park is designed so as to maintain the quality of life of the residents dotted across this vast area of close to 40 square kilometres.

Development Vision

Parc du Sault-des-Chats de Pontiac plays a leadership role in the regional development from which the surrounding communities will benefit. It forms a hub for tourist attractions offering a range of unique activities, giving it national status. The development of the park is based on a "nature-culture" concept, focusing on the theme of **SAULT-DES-CHATS DE PONTIAC THROUGH HISTORY - A MUST**.

Parc du Sault-des-Chats de Pontiac will offer visitors a unique recreational and interpretive experience in a natural environment with exceptional quality in terms of conservation. It will encourage them to participate in outdoor activities, both on land and on the water, and sensitize them to the historic events that have marked this site on the banks of the Ottawa River.

The Sault-des-Chats forms an obstacle that has placed conditions on the way the Ottawa River has been used since time immemorial. The rehabilitation and interpretation of the various transportation systems associated with the history of the site, such as the canoe and portage, the log drive and slide, the paddleboats and the Horse Railway, will form the park's distinctive signature. The falls were the reason for the construction of grandiose infrastructure projects, some of which, like the building of the locks and a canal, remain unfinished. The completion of this project, and the highlighting of the traces that remain, also constitute an important attraction.

The falls themselves were determining factors in the choice of location for human settlement. This aspect will be developed by means of an authentic experience. Amenities will be provided for interpreting the traces of Amerindian occupation, as well as buildings and construction methods typical of the region.

Three zones, three experiences – one unique park!

The **HEART OF THE PARK** will be the site for most of the elements for understanding and interpreting the long and rich history associated with the Sault-des-Chats. Here too will be an opportunity to participate in several recreational activities. The area will include the history interpretation centre, the reception centre, a 300-site campsite, a small marina, a network of footpaths, links to bike paths such as the PPJ, bridle paths and a replica of the Horse Railway, a small railway track system. Located in the geographic centre of the park, this zone straddles the boundary between the municipalities of Pontiac and Bristol.

The **NATURE ZONE** will highlight the natural attractions along the banks as well as the marshes and forests within the park. Footpaths, bike paths and bridle paths will be used to explore these unique and rare environments. A nature interpretation centre will be located close to the wildlife refuge currently under development. Here there will also be wilderness and semi-developed camping sites, and a stable. This nature zone will be in the western portion of the park, within the municipal territory of Bristol.

The **RIVER ZONE** is the connecting thread linking the various sectors in the park. It will provide continuity between the Parc du Sault-des-Chats de Pontiac project and the development guidelines for the Ottawa River in the CRÉO's 2007-2012 Strategic Planning. The development will include some superb installations around the outdoor activities on the water and for water sports. Wharves will be installed for the use of all kinds of craft linking history and the present day. In addition to wharves for canoes, kayaks and pleasure boats, the park will be reviving paddleboat excursions. The project envisages the completion of the unfinished locks to open up the Ottawa River and allow pleasure navigation in the former Georgian Bay canal.

Jobs in tourism

The implementation of Parc du Sault-des-Chats de Pontiac involves investment in infrastructures and construction estimated as being between 8 and 15 million dollars. Development of the park will mean job creation. The installation of this new hub for attractions will lead to at least 10 full-time and about 50 seasonal jobs. This is a prudent estimate based on an approximate attendance of 60,000 visitors. The park will benefit directly from \$800,000 in direct attendance revenue; in addition, \$1M in additional outside-the-park spending will be injected into the region.

This report goes beyond the limits of preparing the development concept, making it a pre-feasibility study for the Parcs du Sault-des-Chats de Pontiac. Based on this initial step, a feasibility study must be carried out as rapidly as possible.