

Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee
Meeting - September 30, 2003
Petawawa Civic Centre
Summary letter

Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee

Many thanks to all those interested and dedicated people who attended our Ottawa River Heritage Designation meeting in Petawawa on September 30, 2003. It was extremely interesting to realize the amount of talent that was in the room that day.

I am writing this letter to enlarge, in general terms, on the point by point minutes of the meeting. We are also sending out this general report of what happened at the meeting so that those who were not able to attend will have an idea of where we are going procedurally at this point. Our thanks go out to John Almstedt from the Westboro area of Ottawa for arranging to set up a website for us at *ottawariverheritage.ca*

We are grateful to the Rev. Daniel Forget for starting our meeting by singing O'Canada in both official languages and Cy Steele, Petawawa Councillor, who brought welcome greetings on behalf of Mayor Bob Sweet.

Yours truly then encouraged everyone in the Civic Centre Hall to relax and have a good day. Those present were asked to feel free to participate in the meeting whenever they felt the "urge". We are one family along the Ottawa and we want to build a good rapport among ourselves. It was everyone's wish to lay out a plan of action and proceed in a coordinated manner.

I stated that this Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee in no way interferes with or inhibits the work of the Temiskawa Waterway Corporation, which is dealing with navigational bypasses for small boats or recreational boats. If anything, it will be a big help to advertise and promote the commendable work that the Temiskawa group has done, and is doing. The Ottawa River will be known provincially, nationally and internationally thanks to the brochures and pictures that will be produced by Heritage Canada and many other organizations. We have some excellent members of the Temiskawa Waterway organization on our Canadian Heritage Committee, so that everyone will know what is going on.

Ray Bonenberg, manager of the Natural Resources District Office in Pembroke, reiterated the Department's support for Ottawa River Heritage Designation. He and his colleagues have been a tremendous support to us and we thank them.

Over twenty years ago, Tom Levebre (M.P. Pontiac-Gatineau-Labelle) and I (M.P. Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke) had the river charted for water depths from Ottawa to the Mattawa/Temiskaming area. Thanks to those with a desire to research and map the Ottawa River further, the river is now charted to the northern end of Lake Temiskaming

(2001). In the Chalk River/Pontiac area they located a spot where depths of water were 250 feet. Approximately 45 kms. north of the Town of Temiscamingue the river proved to be nearly 700 feet deep. Such depths in the Ottawa River are some of the reasons why the Ottawa River is the third largest river in the world in terms of the volume of water that passes through it.

In our present project, to give the Ottawa River Canadian Heritage Status, we will be telling the "real history", locally, provincially and nationally and expressing the pride that we feel for the Ottawa. Its role in the development of Canada in our earlier times will be a big part of our report dealing with the nomination of the river for Heritage Status.

It was decided at the meeting to divide the 1271 km. long river into five sections and have committees (one or more) in each section so that people would not have to travel long distances to meetings. The Directors of each section (Ontario and Quebec) can set up each of their committees and decide whether they need one or more committees. We can set up whatever will work best.

As you will find in the minutes of our last meeting, there are three categories under which a river can be designated (if you have not received these minutes, you will soon):

- Natural Qualities;
- Cultural Qualities; and,
- Recreational (past, present and future)

For further information on these three categories, see the minutes.

The Ottawa River cannot be designated under "Natural Qualities" because Hydro dams change it from its natural setting. It can be designated under Cultural or Recreational. Only one of these categories is needed to proceed to designation. We plan to use both Cultural and Recreational because of the history of the river. We will talk about its past natural settings in the earlier days.

An outline of some of the items that fall under the three categories can be found under these headings in the minutes of our last meeting. So here we go into the world of geology, aboriginal history, animals, fish, plants, rapids, portages, transportation, life of the times, coureurs-de-bois, voyageurs, arrival of Europeans, fur trading companies, timber, lumber camps, tourist boats, settlements, the testing of human qualities, and on it goes!

I want to meet with a number of you from each of our "sections of river" to get your directors and committees in place. We need the help and leadership that we can draw on from each region. We will be in touch.

Many thanks for your patience, as this has been an incredibly busy fall season!

We have an application in to Human Resources Canada to enable us to hire a coordinator/executive assistant to look after office work and communications. It will be a big relief for me if approved. Arrangements with the Ontario, Quebec and federal governments are going well.

My appreciation goes out to the many people who have helped in many different ways. I am looking forward to working with the contacts we already have and to continue to meet new ones.

Yours in the spirit of heritage,

Len Hopkins,
Chair, Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee