



Government of Canada

Gouvernement du Canada

The National Battlefields  
Commission

Commission des champs  
de bataille nationaux

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**PRESS RELEASE**

*For immediate release*

## **The Government of Canada will provide funding for the year-round opening of Gilmour Hill and to add a new walking and cycling trail**

Québec, August 2, 2013 – Following today's announcement of \$8.2 million by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, accompanied by Honourable Shelly Glover, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, and Honourable Denis Lebel, Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, in the presence of Québec City mayor Régis Labeaume, the National Battlefields Commission will implement the works toward the year-round opening of Gilmour Hill.

In light of this announcement, the Commission will complete the drawings and specifications for the year-round opening of this vehicular route of the park beginning in the fall of 2014; the feasibility studies have shown that the project is sustainable and that the negative impacts can be limited and remain at an acceptable level, provided the mitigation strategies described in the report are implemented. Moreover, the Commission will add a safe nature trail for pedestrians and cyclists in the cliff running alongside Gilmour Hill, this optimization should ensure the cohabitation of various users while maximizing their safety.

In January 2011, Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) was authorized by the National Battlefields Commission to inquire into the technical, biophysical, economical and social challenges involved in the winter opening of Gilmour Hill, including geotechnical and traffic analyses, a topographic survey as well as a botanical and a sensitive environment inventory. The final report concludes that the axial highway rehabilitation is feasible by improving the safety of users while minimizing environmental impacts and preserving the landscape and commemorative integrity of the site. However, to achieve this major work will be required.

Considering the need to preserve the heritage and natural character of the park and improve user support services, the Commission was willing to agree to the winter opening of Gilmour Hill under the following conditions: there would not be any cost to the Commission; the project should be designed as a complete project intended for all users, respectful of practices; the historical integrity of the park should be preserved; and the new needs and realities of citizens should be taken into account.

According to Margaret F. Delisle, the National Battlefields Commission chairwoman, "The National Battlefields Commission was anxious for the Gilmour Hill project to benefit all types of users of the Plains of Abraham, not only the drivers. This is why the Commission chose to integrate a safe all-purpose nature trail into the cliff for pedestrians and cyclists, which will also be a valued link between the Samuel-de-Champlain and Québec City's Upper Town." This area of the park will then be highlighted for visitors, hikers and cycling enthusiasts, who can absorb the park's history along the way via the interpretation panels. The analysis done by experts proposes an optimum layout to ensure the safety of users and minimize the impacts on the vegetation and the morphology of the cliff.

The actions contemplated in the Commission's Sustainable Development Policy to reduce the impacts of the emission of greenhouse gas consist in offering infrastructures to encourage the use of bicycles, and in reviewing the traffic plan. The addition of a multi-purpose trail for pedestrians and cyclists is right on this target, and Québec City will implement the required measures to program traffic lights in order to avoid blocking traffic in the park and to increase fluidity. The sustainable development orientations will also be integrated to the project, such as paving recovery, re-use of curbs and street lamps, and reduction of tree cutting. Moreover, in summer as well as winter, the vehicular traffic on Gilmour Hill will now get to Grande Allée via Montcalm Avenue instead of passing in front of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec; this, to better preserve a highly animated area of the park for families and sportsmen and women.

When the issues surrounding the year-round opening of Gilmour hill were considered, it became clear that the Commission could not meet the expenses of the required financing package because the costs related to such a project (construction, rehabilitation, environmental mitigation, maintenance, snow removal, etc.) were too high. Today's announcement shows that the Government of Canada is open and willing to contribute to the project and, in that sense, that it supports the Commission's implementation by meeting the necessary expenses; it should be noted that Québec City had agreed to cover the costs of snow removal and maintenance related to the Gilmour Hill winter component.

Before Gilmour Hill is opened for winter traffic, major works will be required for the protection of the environment, the durability of infrastructures, user safety, and for compliance with the laws. It should be mentioned that the work will involve an archaeological watch for the duration of the operations. Access to the road will therefore be closed beginning next November 1<sup>st</sup>, and the road will be reopened in the fall of 2014, whereas the general public will have access to the trail in the fall of 2015. Considering the different stages of progress of the road and trail component, and for reasons of specialized expert assessments, there will be two separate job sites for the achievement of the overall project.

The Commission has authorized PWGSC for the Gilmour Hill rehabilitation (road and trail). The details of the implementation of the project, including the schedule and the terms and conditions, will be released according to the advancement of the file.

To look up the final synthesis report: [www.theplainsofabraham.ca](http://www.theplainsofabraham.ca)

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