

Upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of the Dominion Parks Board, a seven-member Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada was formed to advise the Minister on the matter of sites of national historical interest. The Board met for the first time at Ottawa on October 28, 1919. The second National Historic Park was established in 1927 and by 1950 there were nine such parks, receiving over 150,000 visitors annually.

The National Parks Act of 1930 provided that the Governor in Council may set apart any land, the title to which is vested in Her Majesty, as a National Historic Park to commemorate an historic event of national importance, or preserve any historic landmark or any object of historic, prehistoric or scientific interest of national importance. Until 1953 the Historic Sites and Monuments Board operated under Order in Council authority and no provision was made for Parliament's formal review of the Board's decisions. The Historic Sites and Monuments Act of 1953 provided the statutory base for the operation of the Board and defined the role of the Board as adviser to the Minister whose statutory responsibility was to develop and implement a national program of commemorating historic sites. Further legislation was enacted in 1955 and 1959 to amend and broaden the scope of the original Act. The Canadian Historic Sites Division, now the National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, was created within the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources in 1955 to develop, interpret, operate and maintain historic parks and sites and to act as secretariat for the Board.

A policy statement on national historic sites in 1968 stated that for commemoration, a site or structure must be closely associated with a person, place or event of national historical importance, or it must illustrate the cultural, social, political, economic or military patterns of history or of a prehistoric people or archaeological discovery, or be valuable as an example of architecture. The statement also included guidelines for the provision of visitor services, interpretative programs and the promotion of information to the public at large. Standards for the preservation, restoration and reconstruction of structures were established which stressed authenticity in the materials used and in the furnishings and artifacts. The policy also recognized the need for a comprehensive program to give full thematic and geographical representation and to establish a long-range planning program to facilitate the development of parks based on such themes as exploration and social, cultural, economic and prehistoric events.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Act provides for a Board of 15 members: two representatives each from Ontario and Quebec and one from each of the eight other provinces appointed by the Governor in Council, the Dominion Archivist, one representative from the National Museums of Canada and one from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development as *ex officio* members. The members are generally historians of distinction. The Board may recommend that sites, buildings and other structures of national importance be developed as National Historic Parks or Historic Sites or that commemoration be carried out by the erection of Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaques, or in exceptional circumstances, of distinctive monuments. Suggestions for the establishment of historic sites and parks come from many sources — the general public, members of Parliament, historical societies and other groups, department staff and members of the Board themselves. Before a site is referred to the Board for consideration, a background paper is prepared by the National Historic Parks and Sites Branch research staff. The Board then determines the significance of the site and makes its recommendation, which may be either favourable or unfavourable, to the Minister. After approval has been granted to a project, a development plan is prepared.

Since its establishment, the National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, on the recommendation of the Board, has been instrumental in the creation of some 80 historic parks and major sites of which over 40 are operational and in the commemoration with plaques of some 650 persons and events of national (as opposed to local or regional) significance. Negotiations are being conducted with certain provinces for the acquisition of other sites already declared to be of major national historical significance. The Department has also entered into cost-sharing agreements with provincial and municipal governments and with incorporated non-profit societies for the acquisition and restoration of more than 38 architecturally or historically significant buildings on the understanding that the other party will pay the balance of the acquisition and restoration costs and will maintain the buildings in perpetuity. A number of monuments of distinctive nature and character which commemorate people and events significant in the nation's history are maintained by the National Historic Parks and Sites Branch.