

on a permanent site. At the end of 1857 Queen Victoria settled the dispute by choosing Ottawa and in 1866 the government of the Province of Canada moved to Ottawa. The next year the first Parliament of the new Dominion of Canada met in an incomplete Parliament Building on the former Barrack Hill.

During most of the next decade Ottawa grew and the government expanded. By the end of the century, Ottawa was a flourishing industrial centre with a population of 59,000. However, little effort had been made to preserve or enhance its natural beauty until the Ottawa Improvement Commission was formed in 1899. Several studies and plans for the improvement of the National Capital were considered but these were deferred because of World War I and for other reasons. Fire destroyed the Parliament Building in 1916 and left standing only the Library which now forms part of the building of neo-Gothic architecture which replaced it. The beautification of the Capital was continued by the Ottawa Improvement Commission until 1927 when it was replaced by the Federal District Commission. The first major step in the redevelopment of the National Capital took place in 1951 with the tabling of a comprehensive master plan for the National Capital Region, the "Gréber Plan". The National Capital Commission was formed in 1959 to carry out its recommendations.

Ottawa today, with a population of some 304,462, and the city of Hull on the north side of the Ottawa River, with a population of about 61,039, comprise the core of the National Capital Region, an area of about 1,800 sq miles (4662 km²) in Ontario and Quebec. In lineal distance, the nearest extremity of the region to Parliament Hill is 18 miles (29 km) and the farthest is 35 miles (56 km). Within that area there are 57 municipalities and a total population of about 693,288. Industrial development in the region is limited, a large proportion of the work force being employed by or associated with the federal government.

Although the terms of reference of the National Capital Commission are "to prepare plans for and assist in the development, conservation and improvement of the National Capital Region in order that the nature and character of the seat of the Government of Canada may be in accordance with its national significance", the commission does not have jurisdictional authority over any of the municipal or regional authorities or the two provincial governments concerned. Most matters affecting the municipalities — such as planning, zoning, land use, building density, public transit, parking and construction of streets, arterial roads and highways — are within their sole jurisdiction, subject only to provincial government approval, so that the National Capital Commission in its development efforts depends essentially upon the cooperation of each municipality and provincial government.

In recent years, the efforts of the commission have focused on the development of a unified and lively core for the Capital. At a constitutional conference in Ottawa in 1969, the federal and provincial first ministers declared "the cities of Ottawa and Hull and their surrounding areas" to be the Canadian Capital Region. Almost immediately, work began to remove the longstanding economic disparity between Hull and Ottawa; 59 acres (24 ha) were acquired in Hull for a federal building program to house various government departments. These include 44 acres (18 ha) acquired in 1972 from the E.B. Eddy Company. In 1973 work was completed on the new Portage Bridge linking Ottawa and Hull and the new Airport Parkway from the airport to downtown Ottawa-Hull was opened.

The recreational amenities of the region have been developed for people to use and enjoy. In addition to scenic driveways, parks and playgrounds, the Rideau Canal provides a five-mile (8 km) ice skating surface in winter and boating in summer. Maple sugar shanties, large garden allotments and 50 miles (80 km) of bicycle paths winding past waterways and through pleasant wooded areas have also been developed. Public concerts in the parks, walking tours, attractive pedestrian malls and museums are there for the participation of all Canadians and their visitors.