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Parks Canada's New Artifact Collection Storage Facility

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Backgrounder

Following an open and competitive tendering process by Public Services and Procurement Canada, a \$42 million contract has been awarded to Pomerleau Inc. for the construction of Parks Canada's new artifact collection storage facility.

The 8,200 m² facility, located in Gatineau, Quebec, will house over 25 million archaeological and historical objects under Parks Canada's care, to ensure the sustainable, long-term preservation and conservation of the collection for the benefit of future generations.

Historical objects in the collection have been acquired over the years to support interpretation, exhibits, and visitor experience at Parks Canada administered national historic sites and national parks. Examples of historical objects include furniture, costumes, textiles and other everyday objects. These pieces are a mix of objects directly associated with Parks Canada administered national historic sites, as well as reproductions and period antiques purchased to support visitor programming.

Archaeological objects in the collection are the product of archaeological work at Parks Canada administered places and range from household goods and construction materials to pre-contact Indigenous hunting tools. It is important to note that the majority of the archeological collection is fragmentary, consisting of items such as ceramic fragments, window glass shards, and nails. Artifacts such as these are not, for the most part, suitable for display but are an essential part of the historical record and its interpretation. They are of high interest to researchers and archaeologists in their study of history in Canada.

Currently, about 60 per cent of the collection under Parks Canada's care is at risk from inappropriate environmental storage conditions and security measures. The new facility will have optimal environmental conditions, ensuring safe protection and conservation of the collection. The collection will be cared for by a team of collection specialists, curators and conservators and will be systematically stored, and easily retrievable.

Design Features

The collection will be protected through optimal environmental and storage conditions, such as:

- Class A climate control with rigorous temperature and humidity set points.
- Double wall construction around the collection storage area for additional insulation, to maintain required temperature and humidity, and to protect the collection from external threats, such as pests.
- Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems that are on emergency generators to ensure consistent climate control in the event of a power outage.
- A storage system that maximizes space and provides flexible storage capacity to facilitate access and retrieval, and to account for changes in the collection over time.

Access to the collection for all Canadians will be facilitated through:

- The collection being appropriately and systematically stored in one location where it is easily retrievable.
- Parks Canada continuing to ensure that interested communities and institutions can use the collection through its active loans program as well as through innovative collaborations.
- Workspaces to enhance collaboration, access and view objects and related documentation.
- Dedicated reception, meeting, and ceremonial spaces, including special ventilation for ceremonies such as smudging, to accommodate visitors, events, and special gatherings.
- Dedicated packaging workshop, loading dock, and quarantine area to safely ship and receive objects.

The facility's environmental footprint will be minimized through green building practices such as:

- Adopting sustainable and energy-efficient green building standards, such as employing the use of recyclable materials, conserving water use, and workspaces with daylight.
- Achieving a net zero carbon footprint by solely using renewable energy (hydroelectricity) to power its operations.
- Adopting energy-efficient practices with the goal of reducing energy use to 30 percent less than the target stipulated in the National Energy code for buildings (NECB), resulting in significant energy cost savings.
- The use of native species in exterior landscaping and dry ponds to retain excess water from storms.

Parks Canada team members will benefit from a healthy and collaborative workspace through features such as:

- Office spaces with abundant daylight and superior indoor air quality.
- Flexible and collaborative work areas.