

Catherine McKenna, Jim Watson meet for first time since cabinet appointment

Ottawa Centre MP talks environment, NCC with Ottawa mayor

By Andrew Foote, [CBC News](#) Nov 13, 2015

Their first official meeting was scheduled to take 30 minutes. It lasted an hour.

When Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson and Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna finally emerged around 9:30 a.m. they told reporters they'd covered a broad range of topics. But questions zeroed in on around two issues in particular: the environment, and the National Capital Commission.

Friday morning's meeting was their first since McKenna was elected Oct. 19 and named to cabinet last week.

"I think we had a very productive meeting and I think we're going to make progress on a lot of the issues that I think maybe we haven't made so much progress before on," McKenna said afterward.

McKenna's new portfolio is keeping her busy, with a first ministers meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the premiers next week, followed by a major climate change conference in Paris at the end of the month.

Watson said one of the city's major projects is an example of where their municipal and federal interests meet.

'That's the priority, economy and environment go together and we will be working with the provinces, we will be working with the cities to make sure that happens.'

- *Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna*

"The investment in light rail transit is going to be our biggest single reduction in [greenhouse gases] in the history of the City of Ottawa," he said.

"With the federal government as a willing partner on light rail transit, that is going to help us at the local level reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the climate. That's why it's important that we have a government that is very activist when it comes to investing into infrastructure. It's not just about commute times, it's about the environment."

"Green infrastructure is a way that we can ensure projects going forward not only support sustainable environmental practices but also help develop the economy," McKenna said.

"So that's the priority, economy and environment go together and we will be working with the provinces, we will be working with the cities to make sure that happens."

Joly takes lead on NCC issues

As Ottawa's only cabinet minister, McKenna was asked about some of her local campaign promises, including a vow to launch a consultation and review process to recommend an alternative site for a planned memorial to victims of communism.

McKenna deferred to Canadian Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly, whose portfolio includes the NCC and who said Thursday she wants to meet with stakeholders so she can decide "promptly" about the memorial's size and scale.

"[Joly] needs to take the time, she needs to get briefed on the file and I think public consultations are extraordinarily important. There was a lack of consultation previously," she said.

McKenna also repeated her promise to improve the NCC's accountability and transparency.

"This is minister Joly's file... but I believe we should have some representation from the City of Ottawa and the City of Gatineau [on the board]," McKenna said. "We need to ensure that the residents that are directly affected by the decisions that are made have their voice heard around the table."

Also on this morning's meeting agenda, said McKenna and Watson:

- Canada's 150th birthday celebrations in 2017
- the Clegg Street to Fifth Avenue pedestrian and cyclist bridge
- the Arts Court redevelopment
- plans for a tunnel diverting trucks from King Edward Avenue
- the future of the former American embassy on Wellington Street across from Parliament Hill
- and affordable housing.