



GREEN PAPER

MINISTERS ISLAND

Where Innovation and History Thrive



SIX-YEAR ACTION PLAN

VAN HORNE ESTATE MINISTERS ISLAND INC

April 2024

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A. INTRODUCTION

Ministers Island is an historical and cultural gem set in the jewel of an environment. The history of the island includes a rich indigenous and loyalist heritage, as well as being the former summer estate of Sir William Van Horne, a recognized nation builder responsible for the building of the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway. In recent years, the Island’s unique heritage, culture and environment have all been showcased to the public through tourism.

This *Green Paper on the Six-Year Action Plan for Ministers Island* presents the future strategic direction for the island. The Green Paper follows an extensive consultation process with our members, our volunteers, our partners, local community and civic leaders, the local general public and both provincial and federal government officials. The consultation process was quite thorough and included one on one discussions, mail in commentary, and a Public Open House. The consultation process was facilitated using an earlier discussion document entitled *Discussion Paper on the Future Direction of Ministers Island* which may still be viewed at <https://www.ministersisland.net/>. The Discussion Paper provided background on the status of Ministers Island and offered ideas on the way forward. VHEMI wishes to take this opportunity to thank all of those people and organizations who contributed during the earlier consultation process. We trust you will see your observations, advice and insights reflected in this Green Paper.

This Green Paper takes the ideas and feedback gleaned through the consultation process and offers a strategic way forward for the island. Feedback from the consultation process recognized the need for immediate actions to address the number of significant challenges facing the island, including a number of those identified in the Discussion Document. The primary challenges include falling visitation rates and deterioration of the historic buildings. A number of community members also identified other needs, such as addressing the presence of invasive species on the island and the need to improve the trail system. Given this sense of urgency, the decision has been taken to cast this go forward document as a *time sensitive action plan*.

Given the sense of urgency VHEMI will begin actioning this plan immediately, however, the opportunity still exists to incorporate any additional ideas that may be identified. In the weeks ahead, we hope you will take the time to review the contents of the Green Paper and provide additional feedback or commentary. You may do this by going to the same website noted above. We welcome any and all advice offered. **The deadline for comments is October 11, 2024.** Following this final phase of consultations the Board of Directors of the Van Horne Estate on Ministers Island will review all feedback, make any final revisions and formally release the plan to the public in December 2024.

B. SIX-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The future success of Ministers Island lies in building on the themes of innovation and history. We can build and secure the future of the island on the innovations and legacies of the past. As we move forward with our members, the community and our partners, we all need to see the island through Van Horne’s innovative eyes and mind: *What would Van Horne be doing on the island if he were here today?* We also aspire to values of stewardship for the earth with a view toward protecting and sustaining the lands and waters of the island for future generations.



Following is the Six- Year Action Plan for Ministers Island.

i. Vision

Ministers Island: Where Innovation and History Thrive

ii. Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles will guide the management, restoration and operations of Ministers Island.

- The environment must be protected.
- The heritage and cultural assets of the Island must be protected for future generations.
- Van Horne’s legacy and innovative spirit must be celebrated and used as a beacon for the island’s future.
- First Nation rights and interests must be respected.
- The local community must always be fully engaged.

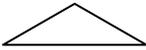
iii. Goals and Pillars

The action plan for the island will focus on six (6) key pillars:

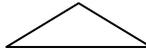
- Environmental Sustainability
- Heritage and Culture
- Tourism
- Agriculture
- Education and Skills Development
- Leadership, Management and Administration

The Infographic below illustrates how the six pillars interact, the specific nature of which is discussed further below:

KEY PILLARS OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR MINSTERS ISLAND



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION

iv. Environmental Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability is the foundational rock for all of the other pillars in the plan. Protecting and sustaining the environment for future generations is the lens through which all other activities on the Island will be undertaken. All activities taking place on the island will do so in a manner that protects the island's natural biodiversity and marine ecosystem.

With respect to climate change, increasing incidences of severe weather and storm surge are negatively impacting the bar road and the coastline, with damaging erosion being the prime impact. VHEMI will work with the province, federal government, local authorities and other partners to identify potential mitigation measures aimed at reducing these impacts.

VHEMI will also work with its partners to develop a *Biodiversity and Woodlot Management Plan*. The goal of the plan will be to protect the island's natural environment. This will include identifying the best means to address any invasive species on the island as well as the ongoing loss of trees from storms. In the case of the woodlot, the first step will be to conduct an inventory of the woods, including the identification of any old growth trees. The plan will also need to address any opportunities to regenerate the island's woodlot through a thinning and/or replanting program.

v. Heritage and Culture

Ministers Island is a designated national and provincial historic site and is protected through legislation. VHEMI will work with provincial and federal authorities to protect the island's historical assets. This work will include the ongoing identification and protection of archeologically significant sites, the proper curation of historical artifacts, and the restoration and maintenance of the historic buildings on the island. Specifically, the following actions will be undertaken in concert with VHEMI's partners:

- 1) Identification and protection of the island's archeological sites.
- 2) Creation of a Museum and Curation Policy.
- 3) The development of a multi-year Historic Building Restoration Plan.
- 4) Ensure the furnishings and overall décor of Covenhoven are authentic to the Van Horne era.

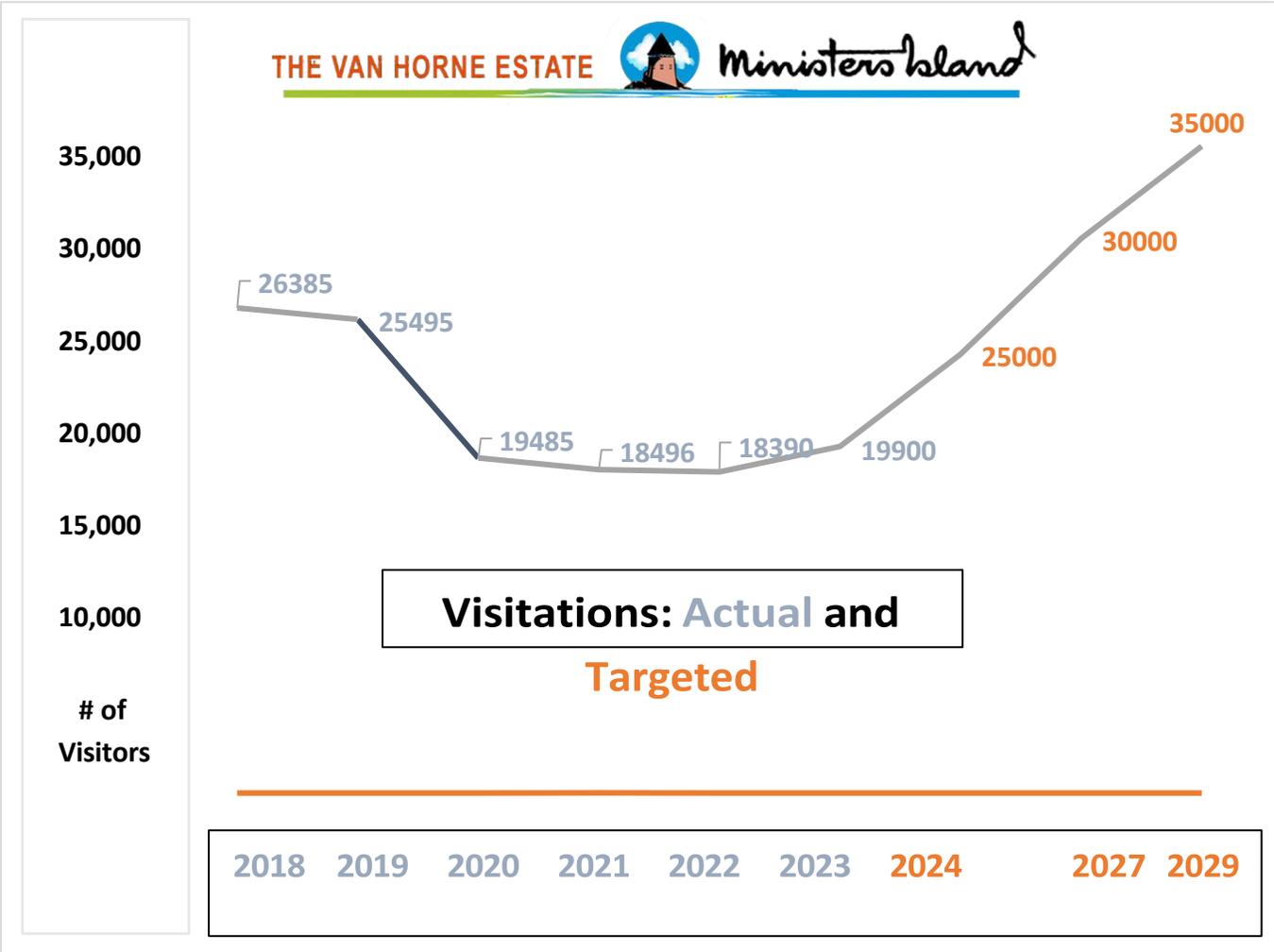
vi. Tourism

VHEMI will work with provincial and other tourism officials in the pursuit of the following **Tourism Growth Plan**. The Tourism Growth Plan is specifically designed to recover from recent and pre-Covid declines in visitation rates. The plan calls for setting specific visitation targets, improvements in programming, and enhancing visitor satisfaction levels. Following are the key elements of the Tourism Growth Plan.

The following visitation targets for Ministers Island will be pursued and measured.

- 30,000 visitations by the end of the 2026/27 season (3-year target)
- 35,000 visitations by the end of the 2028/29 season (5-year target).

The chart below illustrates the past visitation trends along with the Tourism Growth Plan’s three and five year visitation targets.



In order to achieve the identified visitation targets, VHEMI will pursue the following specific initiatives:

- Refreshing the island’s exhibitions on an ongoing basis. Targeted promotions for cruise and bus tours.
- New programming offering experiential and regeneration visitation opportunities. Enhanced number and variety of special events.
- New programming aimed at families and children. High tide access with off-island staging area.
- New eco-tourism opportunities showcasing the island’s natural environment. An improved showcasing of the indigenous history of the island in collaboration with the local indigenous leaders and the community.

A higher emphasis on maintaining, improving and promoting the use of the island’s trail system, including special events.	A welcome and exhibit centre for ticketing and on-island people flows.
Use of digital technologies to improve visitor experience.	Improved landscaping.
Repurposing of some of the historic buildings for tourism purposes, as appropriate.	Improved alignment and coordination of VHEMI’s marketing and promotion activities with local, regional and provincial partners and authorities.
An improved system to monitor visitor satisfaction levels.	Aligning all pillars to the achievement of the visitation targets, including the curation and showcasing of historical artifacts, restoration of the historic buildings, and the education and agriculture programs.
A robust special events program.	

vii. Agriculture

VHEMI will explore the potential to establish an experimental agriculture activity on the island, in keeping with Sir William van Horne’s legacy of innovative agricultural practices. The feasibility of pursuing an agriculture operation of some form on the island will be undertaken in collaboration with the local community and provincial and federal authorities.

viii. Education and Training

VHEMI will identify and implement a series of education and learning programs and opportunities on the island consistent with the themes of innovation, history and environmental stewardship.

ix. Leadership, Management and Administration

VHEMI will ensure it has the right blend of leadership and organizational capacity to meet the requirements of the Six -Year Action Plan. This includes ensuring the Board of Directors is diverse and experienced in the areas of VHEMI’s responsibilities, as well as ensuring that VHEMI’s staffing complement is able to deliver on the key pillars of the plan.

In addition, in recognition of the fact that leadership also comes by way of volunteerism, VHEMI will ensure it has the capacity to coordinate the significant number of community volunteers who consistently support the variety of activities on Ministers Island, whether they be helping with island tours, trails maintenance and management, environmental stewardship or special events.

C. INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN

VHEMI will work with its provincial and federal partners to pursue a multi-year **Historic Buildings Restoration Program** with a view to ensuring the buildings currently on the island remain available to future generations to enjoy.

With respect to *new* infrastructure, VHEMI will continue to promote the need for a strategic parking area on the mainland to facilitate the provision of high tide access using a shuttle watercraft to and from the island. The provision of high tide access is becoming of increasing importance, both in terms of pursuing improved financial stability, but also in relation to rising sea levels and related storm damages potentially rendering the bar road unavailable for use in the future. We will also continue to advocate for a new Welcome and Exhibit Centre, similar to those available to other tourism venues such as Kings Landing and Hopewell Rocks, to facilitate visitation growth, improve visitor experiences, and facilitate on-island movement of people and vehicles.

The historic building assets, along with those new infrastructure assets required to facilitate tourism growth on the island, are identified in the chart below, entitled: **Six Year Asset Management Plan for Ministers Island.**

As noted earlier, in addition to the infrastructure assets noted in the six-year asset management chart below, in the months ahead VHEMI will be exploring the potential of re-establishing a viable role for agriculture on the island. This process will include the identification of any new infrastructure that may be required, such as climate-controlled greenhouses, laboratory space, and other such requirements. These potential investment requirements are not currently reflected in the chart below and will likely be pursued through alternative funding sources.

SIX YEAR ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR MINISTERS ISLAND

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	RATIONALE / RETURN ON INVESTMENT
Covenhoven Roof and Interior Walls	750,000	-	-	-	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect historical furnishings, artifacts & interior walls and floors Improve tourism experience and revenue flows
Heat in Covenhoven	400,000	400,000	-	-	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect historical furnishings, artifacts, interior Extend tourism into spring and fall Improve tourism experience and revenue flows
Ministers House	300,000	-	-	-	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete restoration Improve tourism experience and revenue flows
High Tide Access Staging Area	TBD Identify Land	TBD Purchase Land	500,000 Develop Parking Area	500,000 Develop Parking Area	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodate future high tide access - Protect bar road from increasing traffic - Rising sea levels may prevent future use of bar road
Creamery	-	400,000	-	-	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration required. Repurpose to food outlet to enhance tourism experience and revenue flows
Gardeners Cottage	-	-	550,000	-	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration required. Repurpose for overnight accommodation for staff & security and safety reasons

Gardeners	-	-	-	400,000	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration required. Potential to grow products to provide tourists with agriculture experience.
Greenhouses							
Carriage House	-	300,000	300,000	-	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration required. Improve tourism experience
Bathhouse				75,000	-	-	
Windmill	-	-	-	250,000	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration required. Improve tourism experience
Gas House	-	-	-	-	150,000	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration required. Improve tourism experience
Welcome and Exhibit Centre	-	-	-	-	1,500,000	1,500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve tourism experience and people flow Venue to showcase indigenous heritage and artifacts
New Maintenance Building and Vault	-	-	400,000	-	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storage of grounds equipment/materials
Garage	-	-	-	25,000	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storage of vehicles
Tidal Pool	-	-	-	-	-	50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration required Revenue source as tourism bathing experience
TOTAL INVESTMENT / FISCAL YEAR	1,450,000	1,100,000	1,750,000	1,250,000	1,650,000	1,550,000	All costs are estimates only and subject to more detailed pricing and tendering results.

D. PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The Six Year Action Plan for Ministers Island requires strong partnerships with a number of the island's key partners, including provincial and federal governments, the Town of Saint Andrews, local First Nation leaders, other local tourism operators, and local community and business leaders. VHEMI commits to collaborating with all these partners to ensure Ministers Island reaches its full potential. Just as importantly, VHEMI will count on its many volunteers to help achieve the goals and objectives of the action plan. Specifically, VHEMI will count on the support of the following organizations:

Town of Saint Andrews and other local civic leaders in the area.

Local First Nation leaders.

Local community and private sector leaders and organizations, including local tourism entities.

Southwest NB Service Commission.

Explore Saint Andrews.

Provincial Agencies (NB Departments of Tourism, Heritage, and Culture; NB Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture; NB Department of Post Secondary Education and Labour; NB Department of Education and Early Childhood Education; NB Department of the Environment, and NB Department of Natural Resources).

Federal Agencies (ACOA / Agriculture Canada / Parks Canada / Heritage Canada)

E. SUMMARY OF KEY IDEAS

It is important to underline the belief that all of the aforementioned pillars are highly important and mutually inclusive. For example, current and future generations will benefit from and enjoy witnessing the interactions of all the pillars. If all involved continue to embrace innovation as an underlying principle, the future of Ministers Island will indeed be bright and secure.

For convenience, **Chart 1** below summarizes, at a high level, some of the key go forward ideas related to the above noted pillars. In all cases, more details will be forthcoming as the action plan is implemented in the ensuing years. However, the chart is provided for easy reference and for tracking and accountability purposes.

Chart 1: Key Ideas Related to the Six Pillars

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	KEY GOALS	RELATED OBJECTIVES	RELATED ACTIONS
	Develop environmental sustainability and resource management plans for the island.	To protect the island’s land and marine ecosystems.	Engage the island’s key partners and stakeholders in designing and implementing the subject plans.
HERITAGE AND CULTURE	KEY GOALS	RELATED OBJECTIVES	RELATED ACTIONS
	Preserve the culture and heritage of the island for future generations.	<p>To identify and protect the island’s heritage and culture.</p> <p>To identify and protect the island’s archeological sites.</p> <p>To preserve and protect the island’s historical artifacts and assets.</p> <p>To restore and maintain the existing historical buildings.</p>	<p>Engage the island’s key partners and stakeholders in designing and implementing the subject plans.</p> <p>Collaborate closely with the First Nation leadership in the design and implementation of indigenous related plans and activities.</p>
TOURISM	KEY GOAL	RELATED OBJECTIVES	RELATED ACTIONS
	Promote and showcase the island to the public.	To attract new visitors and increase the level of revisitations.	<p>Complete the renovations of the island’s historic buildings, including the provision of a new roof and heat in Covenhoven.</p> <p>Carry out an authentic refurbishment program for Covenhoven consistent with the Van Horne era.</p>

			Repurpose historic buildings, where appropriate (Creamery / Gardeners Cottage).
			Collaborate with First Nation leaders on how best to showcase the indigenous heritage of the island to the public.
EDUCATION & TRAINING	KEY INITIATIVE	RELATED GOALS	RELATED ACTIONS
	Offer education and training experiences on the island.	To develop and offer an education outreach program to the public with a focus on innovation, history and environmental stewardship.	Engage local people in the design and implementation of the program.
AGRICULTURE	KEY GOALS	RELATED OBJECTIVES	RELATED ACTIONS
	Explore the potential to establish an experimental agriculture research and demonstration activity on the island.	To build on Sir William van Horne’s agriculture legacy.	Conduct a feasibility study to explore the optimal agriculture activity for the island.
LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION	Provide the leadership and organization required to deliver the Action Plan	To build the required organizational capacity.	Provide cost effective management and oversight of island operations.

F. MISSION CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

VHEMI considers the following outcomes to be critical for the Action Plan to succeed:

- 1) Ongoing community engagement and partnership development.
- 2) Achieving the targeted visitation numbers and tracking visitor satisfaction levels.
- 3) Business plans for each of the six pillars.
- 4) Delineation of areas requiring protection for cultural, heritage and/or archeological reasons.
- 5) A list of historical buildings eligible for repurposing.
- 6) A Historical Buildings Restoration Plan.
- 7) A plan for high tide access.
- 8) Appropriate operating and capital investment support from government.

G. BUDGET REQUIREMENTS, VALUE PROPOSITION AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Ministers Island is a significant asset to the local community, province and country as a whole. It has been designated a national and provincial historic site and boasts a rich heritage worthy of protecting and

showcasing to the public. Like the rest of Saint Andrews, it is set in a jewel of an environment and offers visitors an opportunity to learn and be refreshed.

VHEMI's operations are funded through a blend of an annual grant from the province, membership and visitation revenues, and various one-time grants or loans. VHEMI is counting on an enhanced level of annual grant support from the province to ensure it has the organizational capacity to deliver this strategic plan. In return, VHEMI offers a cost-effective management model for the province.

Restoration and maintenance of the island's historic buildings are funded through a blend of province's capital budget program, federal infrastructure investments, and community fund raising activities. The proposed *Historic Buildings Restoration Program* is counting on an enhanced level of financial support from its provincial and federal partners as well as a multi-year commitment consistent with the island's national and provincial historic site status. These investments and commitments are imperative to ensuring no further deterioration of the island's historic assets occur.

With respect to return on investment, all parties noted above recognize that any investment in Ministers Island is an investment in both current and future generations.

H. FINAL REMARKS

VHEMI is a not-for-profit, community-based organization mandated through its 25-year lease with the province of New Brunswick to oversee the management, restoration and operation of Ministers Island. VHEMI's current Board of Directors is committed to providing the leadership and building the required organizational capacity and delivering on this strategic plan in the interests of the existing community and future generations. As the local custodian of the island, VHEMI will continue to rely on its primary partner, the NB Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture for strategic advice, technical support and base funding. As most people in the local and regional community will attest, the potential of Ministers Island is high. In this context, having a multi-year Action Plan for Ministers Island founded on community and environmental values that the local people and indigenous leaders will actively support is a recipe for success.