

**HALIFAX**

# **Heritage Advisory Committee**

Case No. H00523

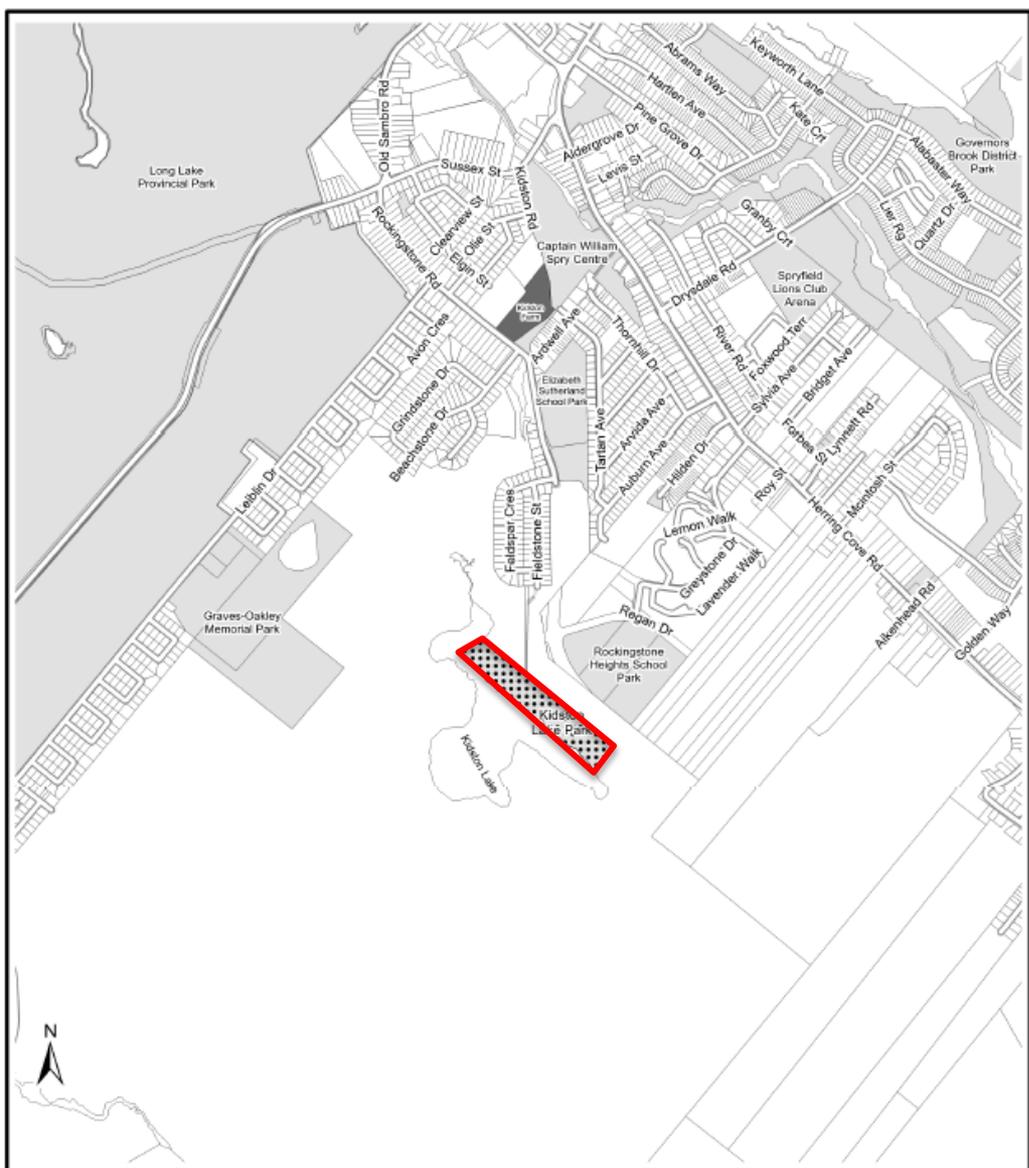
Rocking Stone Site (Kidston Lake Park)  
in Spryfield

February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

# Location



Kidston Lake, Spryfield, Halifax,  
Nova Scotia, Canada



**Map 1 - Location Map**

Kidston Lake,  
Halifax

-  Registered Heritage Property
-  Subject Property
-  Parkland

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HRM does not guarantee the accuracy of any representation on this plan.



# Application Details

- Registration application initiated by Regional Council.
- The Rocking Stone was designated an “Historic Site” under section 425 of the former Halifax City Charter by Halifax City Council on August 12, 1971.
- The property is under municipal ownership, as a park, since 1958.

# Heritage Site vs. Heritage Property Evaluation

A **Heritage Site** is defined as “an area, cultural landscape, or feature, together with any structures thereon, which is significant to the social, cultural, commercial, military or political history and development of Halifax Regional Municipality, the Province or Country.”

Properties evaluated under this set of criteria, if registered, will be formally designated a “heritage area” under the *Heritage Property Act*, which implies the same legal protection as a heritage property.

This designation provides more flexibility to consider landscape elements and the broader history of a site, rather than focusing on a structure.

Examples: Public Gardens, Grafton Park

# Heritage Site vs. Heritage Building Evaluation

The Evaluation Criteria for scoring a heritage site are broken down into four categories as follows:

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Highest Possible Score</b>
1. Age / Continuity of Use	25
2. Historical Importance	25
3. Integrity	10
4. Context	10
Total	70

# Evaluation of the Rocking Stone (Kidston Lake Park) as a Heritage Site



Rocking Stone (South Elevation)



Rocking Stone (East Elevation)



Granite outcrop along Kidston Lake

# Age/Continuity of Use

FOR THE ACADIAN RECORDER.

Messrs. Holland & Co.

Gentlemen,

I am fully convinced that Nova Scotia would be found possessed of as great a proportion of Natural Curiosities as any part of the continent of America, were it adequately explored; but few even of what have been discovered, have we on record; and even to our inhabitants I have no doubt but that "the

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half has not been told." It is no less true than singular, that we often receive the first information of such curiosities as have been discovered in this province, from strangers—or in other countries. It was at all events the case with myself, in relation to the "ROCKING STONE;" whose existence I first heard of from a gentleman in the United States, who had inspected it with much admiration and astonishment.

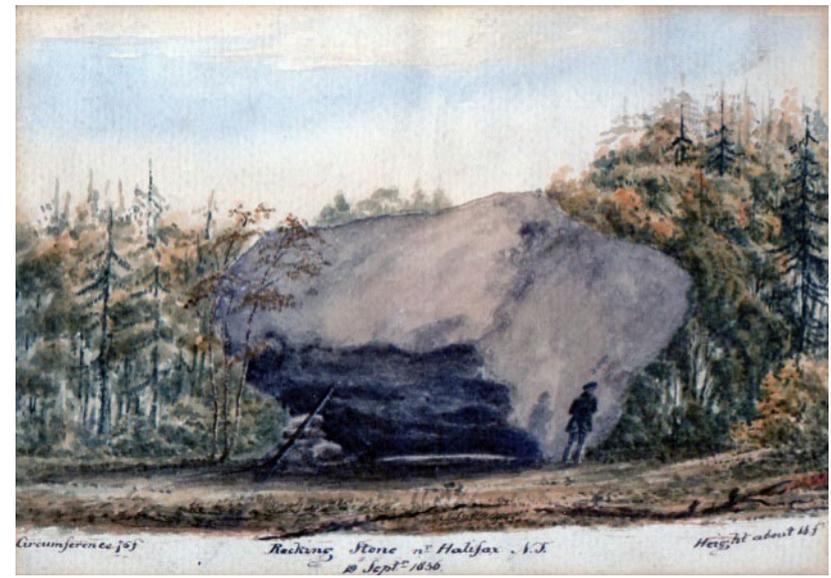
A few days since, accompanied by a friend, I resolved to be personally satisfied of the existence and bulk of this "wonder of nature." We rode to Spryfield (the distance to which is probably six miles) and there left our gig.—Following a foot-path which led past the side of a small lake, we struck into the woods; and after walking about three quarters of a mile and pursuing the directions we had received, we came to the spot. Its most interesting appearance is at first perceiving it. It stands upon a flat stone, the surface of which is level with the ground. The rocking is effected by the aid of a short lever, and may be set in motion by a child of twelve

years of age. Although it is very difficult to attain the summit, yet we succeeded, and felt very sensibly the rocking as we walked to and fro upon it. We examined it very minutely, and discovered this vast body to move upon a pivot in the centre of about 12 inches by 6, and a slight rest at the north end. The quality of the Rock is granite, but apparently somewhat porous. After rocking, and inspecting this wonderful stone some time, we proceeded to measure its size, which we found to be as follows:—20 feet in length—14 feet in breadth—9 feet thick, and the circumference 74 feet. Its motion is from E N E to W S W. The place where the rock is situated is rather pleasant, being a plain, with the ground a little undulatory; and from its summit is presented to your view a beautiful lake, at one side stretching serpentine through the bushes. It is worthy of remark that comparatively few stones appear in the neighbourhood of the rocking stone, and these quite small: so that no one can suppose it could by any accident have become disengaged from any large body of rock. It is truly astonishing, and clearly evidences the skill and power of an Almighty hand! I broke off a piece, for the purpose of ascertaining its weight, by which to form some idea of the number of tons contained in this rock. The following is a crude statement of the result:—Its length being  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches—its breadth  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches—its thickness  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches, made 18 solid inches—and it weighed  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. The rocking stone containing 2520 solid feet, makes its weight to be 162 tons.

I have presumed thus far to intrude upon your attention, feeling confident that a minute description of this rock would not be uninteresting to some of your readers.

I am, gentlemen, yours, &c.

Halifax, August 29, 1823. L. S.



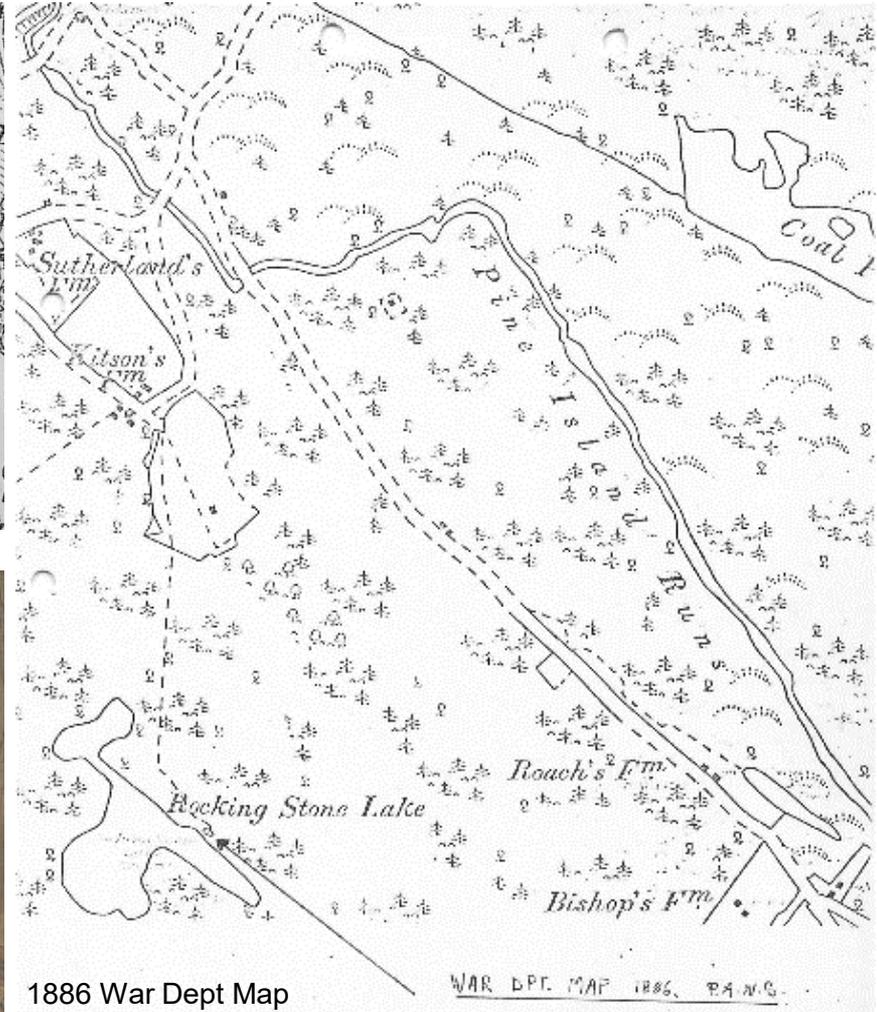
Earliest identified depiction for Rocking Stone, watercolour by by George Back in 1836

Earliest published description of Rocking Stone, *Acadian Recorder*, 1823

# Historical Importance



1865 A.F. Church Map of Halifax County



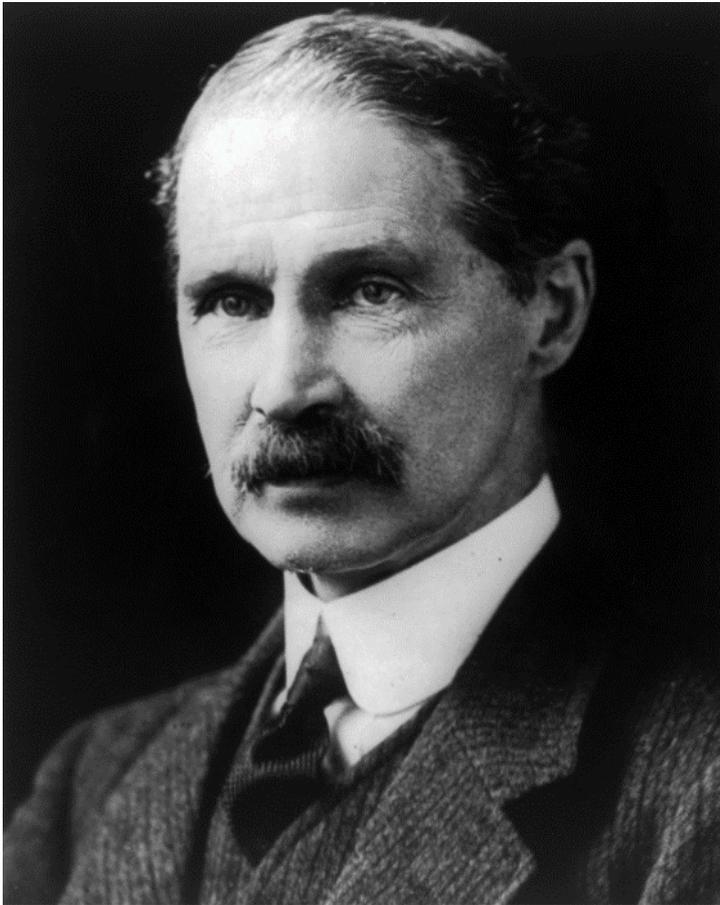
1886 War Dept Map



1870 Map of Halifax Peninsula

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# Historical Importance

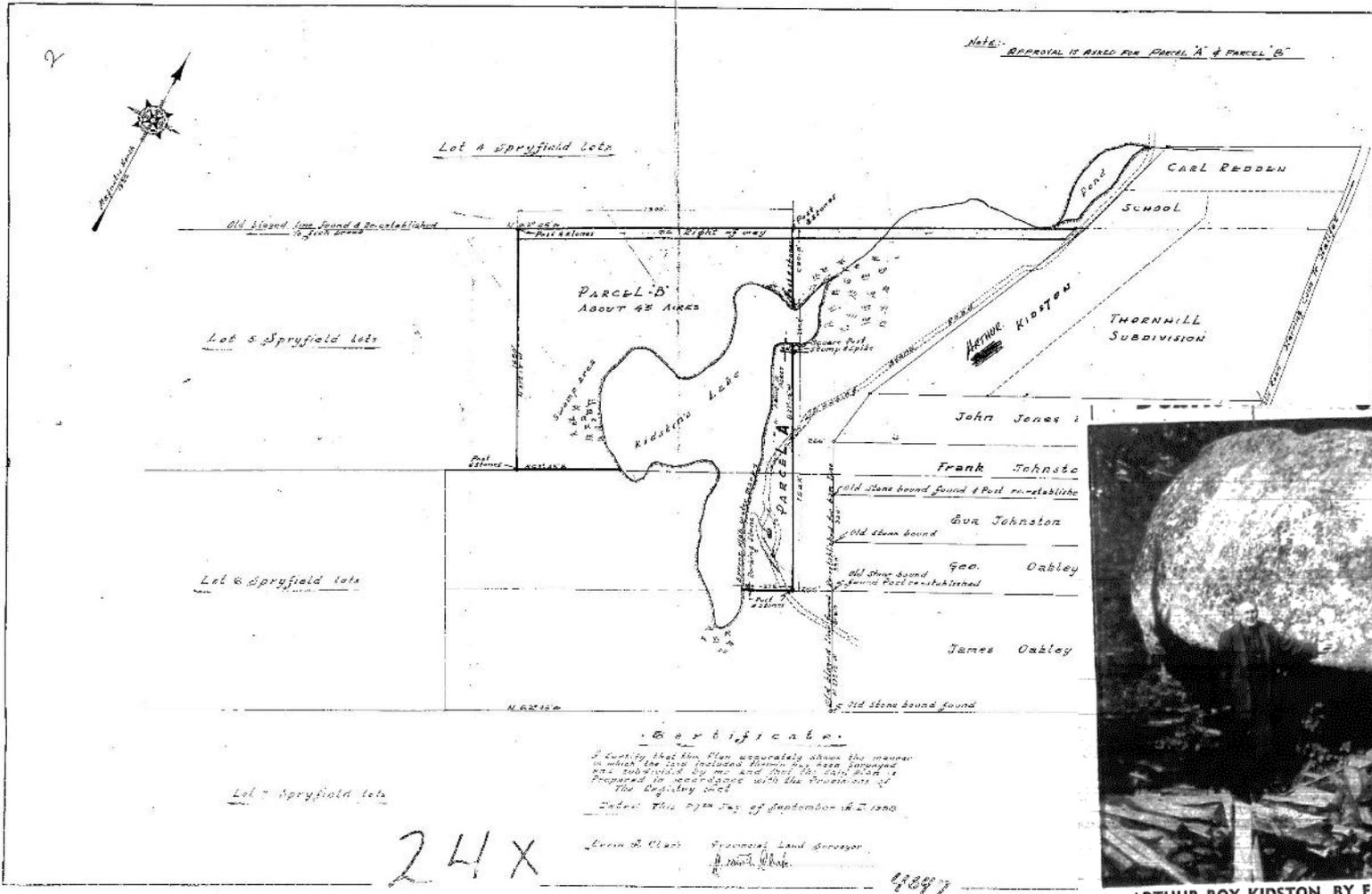


Andrew Bonar Law, circa 1921  
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 1922-23



Clara Dennis, travel writer and reporter, at the Rocking Stone, circa 1930

# Historical Importance



1958 Plan of the Arthur Kidston Estate (above)  
 1963 Photo of Arthur Kidston by Rocking Stone (right)



ARTHUR ROY KIDSTON, BY FAMED ROCKING STONE

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# Integrity

## Character Defining Elements

- A very large granite glacial erratic [Rocking Stone], resting upon a flat granite outcrop, which could once be rocked using a lever;
- Glaciated granite outcrops and other glacial erratics of varied sizes throughout the site, including a grouping of large boulders near the shoreline of Kidston Lake;
- Physical access to the Rocking Stone site, including the last remaining section of the original Rockingstone Road;
- Continued recreational use of the site, including access to Kidston Lake;
- Surrounding woods composed primarily of black spruce and paper birch; and
- dry barrens ecosystem listed in the International Biological Program as a place of ecological value and noted to contain the rare Greenland sandwort (a small, perennial flowering plant).

# Integrity



# Context

## Community Value

16 THE MAIL-STAR Thursday, September 12, 1965

### Famed Stone Rocks No More --- Debris And Neglect Scored



ARTHUR ROY KIDSTON, BY FAMED ROCKING STONE



SAWDUST MARS BEAUTY OF PLACID LAKE  
Family Owned Park Land U.K. Liberals Attempting



DEBRIS MARS SCENE, IS FIRE HAZARD

### Area Donated To County For Recreational Park

By DULCIE CONRAD

Just about this time every year Arthur Roy Kidston, who left his name Halifax County 48 years ago, returns from his home in Michigan to leave his lands to decay and fester until a quick and awful destruction of the once beautiful recreation area known as The Rocking Stone.

These lands border Kidston Lake on the fringe of Spryfield and have been used during the past six years as the site of logging operations by the Timberline Lumber Company.

Although neglected since 1917, the lands were the property when he was born, and he was the first to clear the land for a sawmill. The mill was built on the site of the present sawmill, and the lands were used for logging operations for many years.

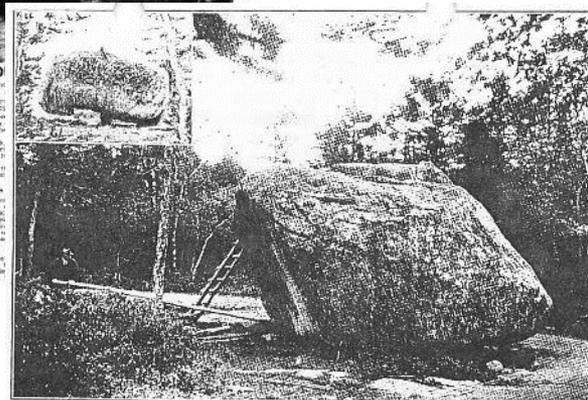
These lands border Kidston Lake on the fringe of Spryfield and have been used during the past six years as the site of logging operations by the Timberline Lumber Company.

### SLABWOOD

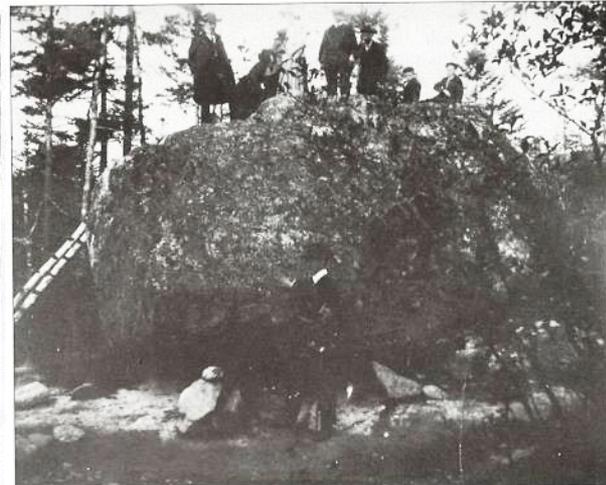
Each of the rocks is about 15 feet long, 10 feet wide and 10 feet high. The rocks are made of granite and are very hard. They are used for building and for other purposes.

### QUADRANT VISTA

The right and left sides of the rocks are very smooth and are used for building and for other purposes.



Spryfield granite "rocking stone," near Halifax, Nova Scotia, 30 x 24 x 15 feet, weight 475 tons, described by Canadian Geological Survey, "perhaps the biggest in the world." Inset left, "Table Rock," 15 x 14 x 5 feet, resting on three stones of different character, raising the big rock 6 to 18 inches off the logs—Both natural curiosities are on land of Mr. Kidston, descendant of an ancestor of Rt. Hon. A. Bonar Law and still in the family. The champion "boya stone" or "parched toaster" is 100 feet circumference and rests on a glaciated surface like itself, so delicately poised, by using a pole or lever will rock back and forth. Formerly the stone would rock by hand, without a lever, but has edged into a more stable position.



# Recommendation

Should the Rocking Stone site at PID# 00307462 in Kidston Lake Park, Halifax, score 35 or more points on evaluation as a heritage site under the HRM Heritage Property Program, the Heritage Advisory Committee recommends that Regional Council:

1. Set a date for a heritage hearing to consider the inclusion of the subject property in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality; and
2. Approve the request to include the Rocking Stone site at PID# 00307462 in Kidston Lake Park, Halifax, in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality, as shown on Map 1, as a municipal heritage area under the Heritage Property Act.