



# **DIEFENBUNKER**

CANADA'S COLD WAR MUSEUM | MUSÉE CANADIEN DE LA GUERRE FROIDE

## **2025–2027 STRATEGIC PLAN**







# BRINGING HISTORY INTO THE FUTURE

We are building on our achievements. Expanding our reach. Cementing our role as a trusted, innovative, and responsive cultural hub. Leading from a place of fiscal strength.

Even though it was constructed in secrecy, the Diefenbunker can't help but stand out. Globally, we are the only Cold War bunker recognized as a national historic site that operates as a public museum year-round. We have set ambitious goals, focused our sights on distant horizons, and steered our steadily growing organization from success to success. We are a beacon in our community, drawing visitors from near and far while supporting and sustaining our community.

Our 2022–2024 Strategic Plan outlined goals in four areas: growth, journey, financial capacity, and preservation. To realize these goals, we expanded the national profile and visibility of the Diefenbunker and increased visitor numbers to pre-pandemic levels. We celebrated our 25th anniversary with two new permanent exhibitions, hosted lectures and academic gatherings, enhanced our digital offerings, and improved the sustainability of our facility and collections. We've diversified our revenue sources to include new and ongoing grants while taking advantage of fundraising opportunities.

We're going to ride this momentum.

To guide us, we are relying on our North Star: an ongoing, comprehensive engagement process that includes staff, Board members, volunteers, stakeholders, partners, and most importantly, the public. Hundreds of survey respondents told us what makes the Diefenbunker important to them, what they'd like to see more of, and what creates barriers to visiting. We listened. This Strategic Plan is informed by what we've learned.

We're going to leverage our considerable successes and our unique offerings. We're going to hone our focus to make a greater, more lasting and relevant impact. We'll conduct all our efforts with creativity and intention. People will hear about our work as we maximize our appeal as an important learning destination worth visiting, time after time.

History continues to guide us. We're building on our past to create the Diefenbunker's vibrant, sustainable future.



**Christine McGuire**  
Executive Director



**Susan McLeod**  
Chair, Board of Directors



# OTTAWA'S IMMERSIVE HISTORY DESTINATION

The Diefenbunker is Canada's most significant Cold War artifact — it is an impressive four-storey underground facility that operated as the country's central communications headquarters during the Cold War, ready at any moment in case of a nuclear attack. Today, it is a one-of-a-kind museum and national historic site, preserving important Canadian Cold War stories and artifacts.

Through award-winning exhibitions, tours, programs, events, and escape rooms, the museum offers an important platform to spark meaningful conversations, collaborations, and connections in response to our changing world.

Located in Canada's capital, the Diefenbunker is a remarkable tourism destination, welcoming visitors from all around the world and serving as an important economic driver for rural West Ottawa.

## A LOCAL MUSEUM AND A NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE WITH A STORY OF GLOBAL IMPORTANCE

The Diefenbunker values the history that happened here, and all those, past and present, who have continued to preserve and interpret it.

Following the end of the Cold War, the Department of National Defence decommissioned the Diefenbunker, emptied the facility, and sold the property to the Township of West Carleton. Fortunately, a group of volunteers with a vision stepped forward to preserve the building and the site was opened as a museum in 1998.

Growing from these humble beginnings, the Diefenbunker now operates as an independent charitable organization governed by a Board of Directors and led by an Executive Director.

A full-time professional staff and a corps of volunteers attend, collectively, to the stewardship, vision, growth, and sustainability of this important educational organization.

The Diefenbunker is a critical learning resource on the Cold War. It brings history to life and tells stories that remain relevant today, so that we might strive to build a more peaceful future.



### MANDATE

To increase, throughout Canada and the world, interest in and a critical understanding of the Cold War, by preserving the Diefenbunker as a national historic site, and operating a Cold War museum.

### VISION

By showcasing Canada's preparedness to secure the seat of government during the Cold War, the Diefenbunker creates this country's most unique learning environment for present and future generations to better understand a critical period in world history.



Top: Butler Hut, the entrance to the Diefenbunker  
Bottom (left to right): Canada and the Cold War exhibition; the Emergency Transmitter Room; and a guided tour in progress



# OUR GOALS

We remain committed to our dual mandate — to preserve this unique historic site and operate a Cold War museum — and we will continue the important work of safeguarding our facility, stewarding our collections, and offering exceptional educational programs, exhibitions, and community events.

In the years since our founding, we have worked hard to construct a strong identity backed by a tightly managed, fiscally sound organization. Our goal for the next three years is to build on this foundation. We aim to grow our reach, our impact, and our support.

We will do so sustainably, investing in a suite of targeted initiatives aimed at tangible results. Ultimately, our objective is clear: to preserve the building while engaging audiences on the multi-faceted subject of the Cold War.

## »» ENHANCED VISIBILITY

To enhance our brand visibility and regional marketing outreach, establishing the Diefenbunker as a premier destination.

## »» ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS

To cultivate enduring relationships with our audiences and stakeholders by delivering enriching and meaningful experiences.

## »» FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

To strengthen our long-term financial resilience by diversifying our funding sources.





# »» ENHANCED VISIBILITY

**1.0** To enhance our brand visibility and regional marketing outreach, establishing the Diefenbunker as a premier destination.

**Core success indicator:**

An increase in in-person visits, reaching 85,000 in 2027.

- 1.1** Identify and understand ideal audiences with growth potential in our region
- 1.2** Develop targeted regional campaigns
- 1.3** Establish mechanisms for sustainable and integrated management of our audience data

# »» ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS

**2.0** To cultivate enduring relationships with our audiences and stakeholders by delivering enriching and meaningful experiences.

**Core success indicator:**

A 10% annual increase in repeat visits.

- 2.1** Embrace storytelling to create captivating and meaningful connections with our audiences
- 2.2** Create an audience development plan that deepens engagement with our stakeholders
- 2.3** Strengthen partnerships and outreach activities to expand our networks and influence



A guided tour group convening outside the entrance to the Diefenbunker



# » FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

**3.0** To strengthen our long-term financial resilience by diversifying our funding sources.

**Core success indicator:**

A 15% increase in revenue from recurring revenue sources by 2027.

- 3.1** Strengthen our revenue sources through scalable funding models
- 3.2** Build capacity to enable organizational fundraising
- 3.3** Embrace AI and emerging technologies for financial growth and stability



A period government office within the Diefenbunker



Top to bottom: A guided tour in progress; the Diefenbunker Machine Room; and high school students enjoying a guided tour





# **Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum**

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