



## ***Inland Waterways International***

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The Honourable Peter Kent  
Minister of the Environment  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Kent

I am writing on behalf of Inland Waterways International to express our concerns about the proposed changes to the Parks Canada heritage canals.

Inland Waterways International brings together people and organizations that support the conservation, use, development and proper management of inland waterways worldwide. It aims to raise public awareness of the benefits of using waterways for a wide range of activities, from inland water transport to cruising, towpath walking and other recreational uses, as well as appreciating their architectural and landscape values as heritage. It also promotes restoration, where appropriate, of waterways which have become derelict. Its membership includes leading navigation authorities, volunteers, individuals and organizations, museums and commercial companies. Individual members include both users and experts in the various disciplines related to inland waterways. All have a keen interest in both the history and the modern significance of inland waterways for commercial carrying and recreational use. Our membership covers over 20 countries.

We are very disappointed to hear about the actions proposed and taking place related to these canals. Parks Canada has had very strong support for its canals whether from a navigation perspective or to the protection of their cultural assets and the natural resources. They are important economic generators for tourism and the communities and residents along them. We are concerned that the proposed changes to the canals may well jeopardize their future viability and ability to fulfil their mandate. It is our understanding that these changes are taking place without a lot of consultation or information. From our experience and perspective this definitely seems contrary to the way Parks Canada has dealt with financial and other issues in the past.

Parks Canada has been a model on the canal world stage with the sound management of its canals, protection of its cultural and natural resources and telling the story about its history. It would appear that these important elements could be lost or much diminished. Parks Canada has been represented at the annual World Canals Conference over many years and has been at the forefront and used as the example of canals well run and balanced in their management. We would suggest they are a source of pride to Canada and specifically Parks Canada. Probably the best example of this is the recent World Heritage Site designation for the Rideau Canal. To see the canal organizations weakened and that leadership role lost would certainly be a "black mark" for the Government of Canada.

We fully understand that financial costs and government deficits are important and they have to be looked after. However, in this case it appears to us that it is being done without attention to transparency that Parks Canada is known for and without much foresight as to the consequences for these great canals.

We ask that you and Parks Canada be more open as to what is being planned and at the same time consider the serious consequences that rash decisions could have on the canals. The wrong decision can have serious consequences whether it is the economic impact on businesses and communities related to the level of service, the loss of important cultural and natural resources due to lack of staff expertise, or the concern of public safety as it relates to water management. Also, consider how the lack of information on the iconic canals and their history with no or limited interpretive presentation can impact Canadians and visitors who seek both learning and recreational experiences.

We trust that you share our concerns with these issues and impacts and will seriously consider them when asking Parks Canada to make changes to their world class historic canals.

Yours Truly

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas X. Grasso". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and 'G'.

Thomas X. Grasso  
Past President, Emeritus  
Inland Waterways International

CC Alan Latourelle, C.E.O. Parks Canada