

January 17, 2013

Gord Brown,MP
Leeds-Grenville
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON

Dear Sir

I am writing to you about the recent revised fee proposal for the Rideau Canal and other actions taken that will severely impact the Canal's future. Although, you are the addressee, I have sent copies of this letter to all the MPs along the Rideau corridor and others who should have some concerns.

Last year you chaired a number of public meetings organized as a response to the vigorous negative public response to shortening the operational season of the Rideau Canal. You may recollect the significant feedback from regional business persons, mayors and concerned citizens. Many concerns were expressed that questionable information on costs of canal operation were being voiced publicly as a rationale supporting cuts. Another common concern was that the cuts to the season of operation were being proposed without any supportive analysis on the economic, social or resource integrity issues that could result. I recall you announced with pride that in light of the expressed concerns and potential impact on the regions economy your government had decided that the length of season would not change.

It would seem that the Government must have its pound of flesh. Late in 2012, Parks Canada announced that the Season of Operation would be retained as before, however the daily schedule of operations would significantly change. In the implementation of these measures, many canal staff have been severed from the Public Service and many others have had their yearly employment terms significantly altered. Experienced staff, individual boaters and area business operators are projecting decreased traffic and negative economic impacts at least on par to those anticipated by a shortened operations season. A number of canal functions have been impacted by this latest wave of reductions. Water Control, Resource Management, Asset Engineering, Visitor Services and Heritage Presentation are all key areas where capacity has been dangerously diminished. Although I do not have specific information, I suggest it is likely that the Capital Program has been reduced to the bare bones as well which should cause some alarm given the fact that the Rideau assets include 40 dams and 17 bridges.

The latest fee proposal seems to be the next tactical move to ensure the Canal is pushed to the point that it cannot be sustained. I think the approach of paying by use is quite elegant and logical. The suggested value per lockage is ludicrous to say the least. I assume the Communications Strategy has already been developed to lower the proposed per use fee and give the perception that the public have been heard and their views respected and this will be unveiled at an advantageous opportunity. I do not think that the Treasury Board User Pay Policy was intended to generate more economic damage than the collective value of the applied cuts and fee increases.

To my knowledge, there has been not action taken to define the economic impact of the Canal on the region nor the impact on public safety, resource integrity (cultural and natural) of the cuts

and management and functional restructuring that has taken place. It would seem that a Government that expounds upon its fiscally responsible management would like to have some foreknowledge of the possible outcomes of the actions to cut staff, hours of operation, capital programming and raising fees before taking action. Apparently not.

I guess it is clear that I have my doubts on the motives and intent of the Government in respect to the Rideau Canal World Heritage Site. I presume that you and your fellow government backbenchers will receive direction from PMO on communicating to your constituents on this matter. It has been suggested to me that officials of the PMO provided direction that targeted cuts to specific activities and functions and locations. It is interesting, indeed ironical that a Government originally elected on a platform of accountability and transparency marches to the direction of faceless officials speaking from the shadows.

I ask that you and your fellow MPs demand that a comprehensive analysis be done on the present economic and social impact of the Rideau Canal and the impacts of the cuts, the new fee proposal and the program and management restructuring of the Rideau Canal on the regional economy, the integrity of the World Heritage Site, public safety and the quality of life of the region.

Yours Sincerely

Gord Giffin

CCs

Pierre Poilievre MP
David McGuinty MP
Scott Reid MP
Mauril Belanger MP
Royal Galipeau MP
Ted Hsu MP
John Baird MP
Paul Dewar MP

Alan Latourelle
J. S. Watt
Darlene Upton
John Bonser
Dave Ballinger
Marc Ackert
Margaret Brand
Andrew Coyne
Ken Watson