

January 18, 2013

Dear Sir,

I am very concerned about all of the turmoil and what appears to be the leading edge of a slippery slope to the eventual destruction of the Rideau Canal (as well as a number of other waterways) that as a child growing up on the Richelieu I became familiar with.

As a "misplaced" Canadian having moved to Vermont after College, I know how sometimes intervention from those Damn Yanks can actually inflame an issue but I can guarantee that aside from all of the potential issues, if this proposal goes through without significant changes, the number of visiting dollars will drastically decline. In my humble opinion the greatest loss however, aside from the huge loss of revenue, will be the opportunity to showcase our (note my Canadian roots) fantastic history and heritage. From what I have read, not only would various fees be ridiculously raised ( over 43% locking and 122% docking increase in a two year period for a brief 6 day trip with no day dockage) but the wonderful and critical resources that make the Rideau a living history portraying the unique heritage will be drastically cut.

Please stop this foolishness. There is no way that I can understand all of the issues and politics you are facing.. (Hell I can't even figure out what Washington is doing most of the time). I do know that the budgetary cuts supporting the Rideau; the lack of fully attending to the UNESCO World Heritage commitments; and the huge increases in costs and confusion to those who want to visit; certainly are giving those of use below the border the impression that someone up there is out to bastardize or totally destroy the essence of the canal.

My grandparents are buried at Hillcrest in Smith Falls, my spinster maiden Aunt devoted her entire long life to teaching the children of Smiths Falls, I learned to swim in the canal waters of the Park there. For years I have waited to travel the Rideau and revisit the part that it plays in my Canadian heritage. I want to see this wonderful resource be there for my grandchildren so they too can revisit their Canadian heritage.

What can I do to help? If revenue is the problem, then lets try to increase the number of visitors and overall usage. Lets do some serious marketing of what a wonderful place this is to go and see and ingest. Lets NOT put up higher fees and reduced services and expect to see things improve. The Rideau Canal is not just a place for rich yachters to play with their toys. Thanks to your forefathers and the many who have cared since, The Rideau Canal is a living vibrant showcase of who we were and how we have become. Don't loose this ! !

Sincerely,

Neil Manders

Brattleboro, Vermont

Addition: January 23, 2013

I doubt that there are a lot of cruisers who simply want to travel a long ditch between Kingston and Ottawa just like there are few people who would want to go to Disneyland just to see the buildings if nothing was working. The whole historical (UNESCO) component along with the pretty ditch, makes this a destination worth visiting. If the government re-directs the focus of this area to simply be a transit/transportation canal I fear that they are starting on the slippery slope to eventual decay and more immediate decline in any financial revenue not only to the canal system but definitely to the local economies who will stand to lose huge sources of income.

In regards to the lockage fees, lets compare to the Erie canal. The Erie Canal runs for 363 mi/584 km across the state ( Rideau is 125 mi/202 km), connecting with other canals and bodies of water along the way. There are many towns along the canal where one can stop, eat, shop, and enjoy the sites. You can also moor your boat and walk or bike along the tree-lined path that runs along much of the canal.

Next summer it will cost me \$37.50 for a 10 day pass compared to \$180 for a 6 day pass on the Rideau. Like the Rideau, there are many mooring places along the way but unlike the Rideau's proposed \$2.00 per foot/night or \$300 of the 6 day the Erie has no charge. In other words I can travel from the **Finger Lakes** all the way to **Waterford** (East end) for a total of **\$37.50** OR I can travel the **Rideau** from Kingston to Ottawa for **\$480**.....

I see this as a no-brainer. YES the hike in rates will, IMHO, result in a dramatic decrease in the number of cruiser boats using it. As those numbers start to decrease, income plummets and the politicians will declare the systems too expensive to support and eventually shut them down.

Neil Manders