

Quebec City, November 20, 1993.

Mr. Shane Foreman
Assistant Vice-President Corporate Affairs
Canada Ports Corporation
99 Metcalfe Street
Ottawa Ontario
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Dear Mr. Foreman,

Please find here enclosed a few documents pertaining to ongoing discussions that have been held over the past few years in Quebec City on the evolution of port-city relationship.

Some local decision makers seem almost proud to ignore most of what has already been accomplished in Toronto, Montreal and other cities where the public interest was put forward by citizens and politicians alike.

The findings of the Crombie Commission in Toronto are entirely ignored here in Quebec City, even if they have been translated in excellent French at great cost. Likewise, the people-first approach adopted by the Old Port of Montréal Corporation is quite foreign to the official local mentality. The Québec City area will lose millions of dollars in local and regional cruise operations revenues in the years to come because our wharves do not offer the services needed for modern small and medium-sized cruise ships.

For example, only the foreign ships big enough to berth right in front of the city benefit from the direct visual access to and from the Old City. Our local ship operators will be hidden behind the military compound presently under construction, with the exception of those whose ships are big enough to berth right below the Dufferin Terrace. At that location, there is basically no space for any growth in the number of ships (there are two users at this time). And you know the three main rules in order to do business in the cruise industry: 1) Location; 2) Location; 3) Location.

Nobody seems to have any plans to accommodate some growth of the local and regional cruise industry, which is nonetheless increasing its operations by 10% to 15% every year. Nobody has even bothered to determine the economic impact of local and regional cruise operations. According to a preliminary estimate, the economic impact of local and regional cruise operations could exceed the total impact of the foreign cruise ships that drop anchor in front of Québec City during the summer and fall.

With cinemas, museums, military schools piling up in an area that should be kept free first and foremost for maritime infrastructures and needs – without mentioning access and use of the river by the public, visitors and tourists alike –, the urban forces are sealing the fate of any future local cruise development in front of the historic city for decades to come. City officials behave as if this area is an *old* port, which means for them a *dead* port. Once, a prominent city council member summed up what appears to be the prevalent mood towards our own regional cruise industry: “You know, those cruise operators do not bring any benefit to the city and they are a pain in the neck!” (*Tu sais, les croisières, ça ne rapporte rien à la Ville et ça nous amène un tas d’embêtements !* » (Verbatim, Thunder Bay, May 29, 1992)

Most curiously, the central administrations of the Federal government, whether they be Transports, Environment, Public Works, even Parks and Tourism (for the cruise industry) are either non-informed or do not seem to care. To take only one example: some 15 000 signatures have been gathered right on the wharves that asked to hold public hearings *before* the military would begin building a Naval school on a commercial wharf, coupled with a building to house the cadets, all this to no avail. (Right across the street, there is a huge building that has stood empty since the early Eighties...) -

Even if the Auditor General of Canada stated in his 1992 Report that three similar Naval Schools recently built in the Province of Québec (in Chicoutimi, Rimouski and Trois-Rivières) stand today half empty, a fourth is being built in Québec while the *Globe and Mail* reports that the mine sweepers for which Canada wants to instruct the crews in the new school may themselves never materialise. (*Globe and Mail*, Nov. 8, 1993) Another forty millions or so down the drain?

The weakness of the local and regional maritime interests in making their case is a fact of life. They seem to ignore where City Hall is located. For many years, it has been various citizen groups that have fought the most relentlessly to halt the spread of *dockominiums* right on the wharves of Pointe-à-Carcy and the Louise Basin, partly because they knew full well that the next target of local land developers would be that stretch of land that support the grain elevators of Bunge Co., an important port customer.

I was told bluntly by a leading architect involved in those (failed) attempts: “This is a problem that will have to be dealt with”, his arm pointing towards the grain elevators. However, after many years of being told by citizens organisations that these elevators were not so ugly after all, that many jobs depended on them and that tourists like to see such examples of early industrial architecture, the city folks have seemingly ended their efforts to get them relocated somewhere else along the river. Eventually they just might get the idea to illuminate them at night, as it is done in Montréal and in Europe.

Demise of the *Boulet Report*

In 1989, after many years of efforts by dozens of citizen groups, the Federal Department of Public Works set up the Advisory Committee on the Future of Pointe-à-Carcy (the

Boulet Commission). For the first time, after having spent and/or squandered about 125 millions, Ottawa finally resolved to listen to what the general public had to say.

After several hearings and a public opinion pool which both pointed in the same direction, the Committee came up with the recommendation that a public park should be given priority in the area. (Let's note that the residents of the Lower Town, much disadvantaged by Canadian standards when it comes to parks and access to recreation and water, now consider the city's waterfront as their front porch, as they say.

This recommendation of the consultative Commission was in the best public interest: the 1.5 million visitors a year would get some public services and the general area would be preserved free enough of buildings so that it would be conceivable to envision – even only in a generation or more – a return of commercial maritime operations for small and medium-size vessels right in front of Old Québec, precisely where the crowds of would-be customers are the thickest in summertime. (Ship operators need a basin for their trade, not concrete waterfronts filled with museums, schools or theaters...)

Alas! The Commission's Report and its public-interest approach is presently being shunted aside to make way for even more non maritime-related buildings in defiance of its main recommendation: *"That the future of Pointe-à-Carcy be shaped essentially by its threefold vocation as a seaport, public space for strolling, and historic site"* (p. 52). In the Commissioners view, the addition of new buildings (the Naval Reserve School, an IMAX theatre) is clearly against the public interest:

"Pointe-à-Carcy is one of the few places along the many kilometres of shore downstream of the Québec bridge where the public has access to the river, and this probably explains, at least in part, why it has become so popular. (...) For the use for which it is to be put, Pointe-à-Carcy needs open spaces rather than buildings. Openness is, in fact, the goal for which we should strive if the site is to be restored to its full worth in the eyes of the public" (Report, pp. 47, 61).

UNESCO itself has pinpointed the fact that *"the laudable principles of the Boulet Commission (applicable to Pointe-à-Carcy) while well-known have not been formally adopted as a guide for action at the municipal level"* (ICOMOS, Report on World Cultural Sites, December 6-14, 1992). The former Minister of National Defense concurred (T. Siddon to D. Zaccardelli, *Letter*, August 26, 1993).

As you can see, the events presently unfolding in Québec City warrant more than passing interest from those people around the world interested in urban/maritime interface developments in medium-sized cities of historic value. In 1985, Québec City was added onto the World Heritage Sites list by UNESCO. Since that time, the Canadian Government has a strong mandate to make sure that the immediate surroundings of the historic quarter (the buffer zone) are not overwhelmed by self-styled *modernistic* structures.

If the Croatian city of Dubrovnik was advocating urban development to take place between its old walls and the Adriatic Sea similar to those projects that are now forging ahead between the Old City of Québec and the St. Lawrence River, the whole world of Heritage conservation would be up in arms. Since this is Québec City, nothing happens. But this is Canada, eh?

Amazing things are happening here, including RCMP officers in plainclothes being attentive guests at the birthday party for eighty years old Mrs O'Farrell... –

Life in Québec can be exiting from time to time!

Please accept my best regards. As you know, you are most welcomed any time in Lower Canada.

Léonce Naud

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