

**Projet de modernisation des débarcadères
de la traverse d'Oka**

MÉMOIRE PRÉSENTÉ PAR
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Att: Commission secretariat coordinator

Projet de modernisation des débarcadères de la traverse d'Oka

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My name is Dianne Laheurte. I am a citizen of Hudson.

My interest in the project for the modernization of the Traverse d'Oka pertains mainly to the environment and my family's quality of life in Hudson. One concern is the increased car pollution that will come with the expansion of the Traverse d'Oka that will most certainly follow this proposed modernization, as neither the current nor the proposed modernization plans address the present user demand on the weekends. My other concern is the waiting cars and trucks that can regularly be found backed up to the train tracks on Bellevue, and backed up Main Road coming from Vaudreuil, blocking through traffic for the locals, as Bellevue and Main Road are only one lane in each direction, being blocked by the line ups of vehicles on the weekends. The idling cars cause emission pollution, as well as cause serious safety concerns on these two roads as they do not allow safe passage for local traffic, nor even for emergency vehicles.

I do not believe that this modernization project is acceptable to our community. This is a seasonal ferry and not an essential service, with commuters having to find an alternate route from Hudson to Oka when the ferry service is not available. This ferry is more of a tourist attraction than a vital service, as the current boats pulling barges are a novelty, and people come on the weekends from miles around just to take a one way trip from one side to the other, to marvel at how these boat pilots capably maneuver the barges. Hudson is a quaint town, with a quaint, seasonal ferry service. Our roads are narrow and not adequately maintained as our tax base is low due to our small population of 5000 citizens.

I am concerned that a modernization will only lead to increased rider ship followed by a request from the owner to increase the number of these new barges from two to three to four in no time at all. "Build it, and they will come". If the capacity is increased, the users will increase, thus not solving any problems, just creating new ones. We were told at the BAPE hearings on March 27th and 28th in Hudson that the entire cost of this modernization will be that of the owner of the Traverse d'Oka, which is not quite accurate, as likely government subsidies for this modernization will be funded by us, the taxpayers. And in answer to my question on March 28th about my road safety concerns, it was confirmed to me that the cost of any required road improvements, present and future, will be solely that of the taxpayers of Hudson, which would have a serious negative impact on our community and on our taxes.

Modernizing the fleet will not improve the quality of life for those of us who live in Hudson, but will add the visual pollution of the new barges to this rural, residential area, as well as disturbing the shoreline with the proposed long and wide wharf jutting far out into the Lake of Two Mountains, along with the increased fuel emissions from the increased users, in addition to the imminent increased tax burden for infrastructure and road improvements to support the traffic to and from the ferry, the proposed modernization project of this privately owned ferry system will have a great negative impact on the citizens and taxpayers of Hudson, environmentally, financially, and our quality of life.

In my opinion, if safety is the main reason that the Minister of Transport is demanding a modernization of the Traverse d'Oka, then there are certain elements that should be addressed. The Minister of Transport needs to look at Bellevue and Main on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon with the ferry traffic backed up in all directions. He can simply speak with our Community Patrol or the SQ for confirmation of the dangerous road conditions and congestion on the weekends. This is a far more serious safety concern than a bump of a barge or of a motorcyclist that cannot drive a plank. The planks could be made wider to allow vehicles to more safely drive on and off the barges. Maybe just one wider motorcycle plank could be added on each barge. Maybe the Traverse parking lot could be expanded into the present grassy area to get the waiting cars and trucks off of our roads. And that these cars should be required to turn off their ignition while waiting in line. And maybe the owner of the Traverse d'Oka can hire a person to aid the traffic on the roads as is done at the local Auberge Willow Inn. And maybe these new barges should be winter stored elsewhere than in this Hudson residential area. Maybe they could be stored in Oka where they presently have winter storage for boats. Planting a few trees in the parking lot will not hide the towers from every angle in this low lying residential area. And why can the owner not modernize with a smaller boat ferry system? Does it really have to be these larger ferries? Does he really have to modernize?

It is my opinion that the authorization to modernize the Traverse d'Oka should not be granted as presented. Hudson is quaint, and simple, safe, and quiet, and we want to keep it that way. This ferry is operating in a strictly residential zone under an acquired right. This acquired right does not give the right to the owner to disrupt our town for his profit, nor to make our roads and environment more unsafe and at our expense. It is my opinion that the Town of Hudson would be better off without the ferry rather than to proceed with this modernization and inevitable subsequent expansion. While the Traverse d'Oka is unique as it is now, complementing the characteristics and charm of the Town of Hudson, it is not an essential service, and does not warrant such a modernization and future expansion. Not at our expense, and not at any cost. Thank you.

Dianne Laheurte