

HUBERT BOURQUE, ING.

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Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement
575, rue Saint-Amable
bureau 2.10
Québec, QC G1R 6A6

Reference: *Project to modernize the wharfs of the Oka ferry by Traverse Oka inc .*

This letter is submitted in support of the proposed modernization of the Oka ferry wharfs. I am a registered professional engineer and have worked as an environmental professional in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, Pennsylvania, and Texas. I have participated in environmental hearings for projects in Canada and the US and currently am consultant for a proposed LNG (Liquified Natural Gas) import terminal in Québec.

My family and I have been residents of Hudson for over five years and enjoy Hudson because of its unique character and access to Montreal and Ottawa. I have been and currently am a frequent user of the Oka ferry for business travel to Saint-Jérôme, Blainville, Trois-Rivières and Québec City. My annual timesavings from using the ferry and the ice bridge represent some 50 to 200 hours per year.

Safety

Over the years, it has become clear to me that a safer and more efficient system is needed. While the proponent has not had serious accidents, the increased use of the crossing demands a greater emphasis on safety. It is my considered opinion that can only be achieved through the use of modern, conventional equipment. The current system is a novelty unheard of elsewhere and needs to be upgraded to current standards. I was personally involved in an incident where on one occasion the towboat operator became lost in a heavy fog on the Oka side. From his low vantage point he was unable to see any reference points on land while from the barge, I was able to locate the Oka church and wharf above the fog.

Capacity and Efficiency

For the most part wait times are less than 15 minutes depending on time of year and number of barges in operation. The current system is not flexible enough to meet daily and seasonal peaks and rapid changes in demand. This results in queuing on Main Street in Hudson. The new system while maintaining current maximum capacities will be more responsive to rapidly changing demand and will serve to mitigate local traffic backup.

Integral Part of the Community

The Oka ferry is an integral part of Hudson's access to a transportation system that allows its residents to live in a town unique for its strong sense of identity while

providing them convenient access to major highways, airports, passenger rail travel and recreational facilities. The Oka ferry is part of a transportation network that provides economic opportunities for people who chose to live in Hudson but who work elsewhere.

Many local businesses enjoy significant revenues from the business generated by tourism associated with ferry traffic. Convenient access to Hudson while bypassing major highways brings traffic that would normally have not arrived in the area. These revenues ensure the viability of restaurants and other businesses that both tourists and residents may enjoy. The Oka ferry is an integral part of the vitality of the community and should be supported as other Hudson businesses are.

Noise and Visual Impacts

Using the example of other ferries on the Ottawa River, the new ferries and docks are more appealing than the current towboats and barges used for the Oka ferry. Further, noise associated with docking operations should be significantly less.

Personally, I place little nostalgic value on the current system however we should take photographs and videos over the coming months so that we may adequately record its historic importance. The proposed ferries are visually more appealing and better depict Hudson and Oka's close association with the Ottawa River.

In summary, I am strongly in favour of the proposed project and believe it to be an integral part of the Hudson and Oka communities. It provides an efficient link to the Montreal area highway system via Autoroute 640 while for the present delaying for perhaps another 20 years the eventual extension of 640 and its bridge over the Lake of Two Mountains.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hubert Bourque", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hubert Bourque, ing. (QC), P.Eng. (ON)