

December 27, 2006

Honourable Donna Cansfield
Ministry of Transportation
77 Wellesley St W, 3rd Flr, Ferguson Block
Toronto ON M7A 2A2

E-mail : dcansfield.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Dear Minister Cansfield

First of all, I want to thank you for meeting with the Ontario Marine Transportation Forum on December 12th to review the conclusions of the November 28, 2006 Ontario Marine Summit. As we mentioned, we have had very positive feedback from the event. Industry leaders were especially appreciative of your participation. We believe that we are making real progress towards developing a marine policy in Ontario. A large part of the credit for getting Ontario's marine industry "back on the government's radar" goes to you. We are truly grateful for your interest and support.

Overwhelmingly, the Summit concluded that Ontario needs an effective marine policy. Such a policy will not only provide much needed support for Ontario's marine transportation industry but it will also help the Government of Ontario meet its objectives to reduce gridlock, improve competitiveness and enhance trade and improve the sustainability of its transportation systems by enhancing safety and environmental performance.

During our meeting on Dec 12th you made several helpful suggestions and recommendations for potential action to follow up upon the successful Summit. As these actions will form the basis of our efforts during the coming year we have taken the liberty to summarize our discussion:

1. The Summit concluded that there was a need to improve dialogue between Government and all modes. The OMTF believes that a Minister's Multi-modal Table that would include senior representatives from each mode together with the Minister and key staff to meet at regular intervals (perhaps 2 to 4 times) during the year would be an effective tool to ensure that topics such as transportation sustainability and inter-modal efficiency are discussed. We appreciate your favourable response regarding this proposal and note that it can be tied into the "Sustainability" Forum that the Minister is planning.
2. The Summit recognized the need to make the OMTF a permanent and appropriately resourced body. Suggestions made included sharing costs for research and promotional activities. We were pleased to learn that you are considering the development of an Ontario transportation research capability to provide expertise and resources to support transportation projects directed at improving sustainability. We look forward to talking to you more fully about this potential.

3. The Summit recommended the creation of a bipartisan “Ontario Marine Caucus” and the development of an annual Ontario marine awareness day at Queen’s Park to improve understanding and awareness of Ontario’s marine transportation industry. We appreciate your very positive and supportive response to these proposals. We will follow up on your suggestion and start such activities in 2007.
4. Because of the importance of human resources, the Summit strongly supported the resolution of the funding crisis for the marine training programs at Georgian College. We very much appreciate your advocacy on this issue. We look forward to the results of your initiatives and those of your Chief of Staff, Jeff Ryan, with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Training, Colleges and Universities, among others, to determine the best way to achieve the necessary funding. Needless to say, the Marine Club dinner would be an excellent opportunity to make an announcement in this regard.
5. The Summit supported the need for a stronger multi-modal capacity within the Ministry of Transportation. This will give MTO the resources it needs to make the gains necessary to move toward transportation sustainability and multi-modal efficiency. Adequate staff resources are necessary to support important initiatives and policy development. We are heartened by your comment that Ministry staff must think in terms of providing meaningful support and inter-action with the industry. We look forward to further progress in 2007.
6. One of the key suggestions from the Summit was for Ontario and Quebec to have formal linkages regarding marine transportation and policy initiatives. We are, therefore, encouraged by your commitment to a further Ontario – Quebec Ministers’ meeting to be held in Quebec City. As discussed, the OMTF will liaise with the Quebec Transportation Department officials and industry representatives to organize this meeting and to help make it as meaningful and mutually beneficial as possible. We are targeting a meeting date sometime during the Spring of 2007.
7. As you know, the Federal government continues to play an important role in the marine industry. We appreciate your offer to facilitate a meeting with the Federal Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon and to accompany the OMTF to discuss Ontario’s issues concerning Federal marine policies and regulations.

I trust the foregoing reflects your understanding of the discussions of our December 12th meeting. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

On behalf of the OMTF and all of those who participated in the Ontario Marine Summit, we extend our very best wishes to you and your family during the holiday season and for the New Year. We look forward to continuing our positive relationship in 2007 and to building upon our accomplishments.

Yours truly,
ONTARIO MARINE TRANSPORTATION FORUM



Wayne A. Smith
President OMTF