



Thursday, November 19, 2020.

To: Chris West, Chairman; Cc: the Board of Directors
Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston
Via: E-mail c/o Museum Manager, and Programs and Communications Manager

I am president of The RJ and Diane Peterson Keewatin Foundation, the charity caring for the S.S. Keewatin in her home, Port McNicoll. Please be aware that the ship was committed to be donated to our charity in this municipality in the buy/sell agreement of November, 2011 between her previous owner, RJ Peterson, and her current owner. This commitment was confirmed in public utterances by the president of her current owner during the ship's return from 45 years in Michigan, and enshrined in the articles of incorporation of our charity, which was created by her current owner.

On the strength of that commitment, hundreds of volunteers contributed tens of thousands of hours to the restoration, care and maintenance, and operation of S.S. Keewatin as an historical attraction over the last 8 years. And hundreds of residents... including the families of former CP employees and crew... have donated thousands of objects as display artifacts, in many cases objects originally purchased from CP when the operation here was wound down in the mid '60s. This commitment has resulted a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence four years running (2016-2019).

S.S. Keewatin is "the world's last Edwardian era passenger steamship" and we proposition her as such to attract visitors. However, the ship is not an "old timey amusement park". Port McNicoll was the eastern terminus and home port to the Canadian Pacific Upper Great Lakes Fleet for most of the first half of the last century, and we tell visitors that story, *in situ*. Port McNicoll was the destination of the boat train which brought passengers to cruise the Great Lakes on Keewatin, or her twin Assiniboia, on their way to a tour of the Western Canada on "The Canadian" and visitors experience that presence.

And that's only a portion of Canada's largely unknown "inland seas" maritime story, that began with CP ships traversing the Upper Great Lakes between railheads to connect the national transportation system and make "The Last Spike" actually mean something. Dubbed "Chicago of the North" Port McNicoll was created by Canadian Pacific and in 1912 became home for all five ships and subsequently the site of Canada's second largest grain elevator as well as Canada's longest wooden trestle. When the steam age ended, CP abandoned Port McNicoll and RJ Peterson saved the ship from the breakers

We, the volunteers who turned the current owner's \$1M investment into an independently-valued \$48.7M (but truly priceless) Canadian artifact intend S.S. Keewatin stay in Port McNicoll, where her history lives. The promise was made, we've done the work, and her story is here. Her current owner seemed steadfast in its resolve to fulfill its responsibility until, coincidentally, your facility was restored to you: then, inexplicably, our application to Canadian Heritage to establish our museum was scuttled, and now her current owner is supporting an application to Canadian Heritage by your organization.

We don't think that's right. We thought you should know.

Wayne Coombes
President

S.S. Keewatin • operated by The RJ and Diane Peterson Keewatin Foundation, DBA Friends of Keewatin
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