



February 20, 2009

Hon. Monique Smith  
Minister of Tourism  
Ontario Ministry of Tourism  
Hearst Block, 9th Floor  
900 Bay St  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 2E1

Dear Minister:

As you might expect, we at the Maid of the Mist Steamboat Company, Ltd. (Maid of the Mist) have been following the public statements being made recently by representatives of Ripley Entertainment, of Orlando, Florida and Alcatraz Media, of Atlanta, Georgia with great concern. They totally ignore the many basic geographical, physical and climactic limitations to our operation.

Given the seriousness of some of the misrepresentations that have been made, we thought it important to take this opportunity to ensure that your ministry had a good understanding of some of the many challenges that exist with the running of such a successful tourist attraction.

By way of background, the Maid of the Mist currently operates four boats in the Niagara Falls basin and serves customers from docks on both sides of the border.

Representatives from both Ripley's and Alcatraz would like the public to believe that it would be a simple and quick process for anyone to replace the four Maid of the Mist vessels with a fleet of their own. Replacing our boats with a new fleet, that would be able to serve the public at the same level of service that they currently receive, is a process that would literally take years to accomplish.

The Maid of the Mist boats operate from a landing adjacent to the lower Niagara River, 180 feet down into the Niagara Gorge. With the Horseshoe Falls located to the South and the Niagara River rapids to the North, it is physically impossible to deliver a boat to the landing by water. Based on decades of experience we have found that it is not possible to lower a 154 gross registered tonne boat, capable of carrying 600 passengers, into the gorge. Each new boat would have to be constructed off site,



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disassembled into approximately 12 to 14 pieces, delivered into the gorge, and reassembled on the water's edge.

A further complication, likely unknown to them, is that there is a limited amount of space at the landing which could be used for this reassembly. There is only enough room for one boat to be reassembled at a time. A further complication is that this work can only be done safely during the late spring, summer and fall seasons, as it is common during the winter for an ice bridge to form in the lower river. It is also common for ice to pile up onto the landing, in the same location where the reassembly would be taking place.

A conservative estimate of the time required to construct four boats is three to four years - which does not include the time needed beforehand to design the boats, or for Transport Canada-Marine and the United States Coast Guard to provide the needed approval of the ships' design and engineering. This alone could take upwards of one year.

Another important factor is that the Maid of the Mist holds the license to operate on the American side under a 40 year lease running through 2043. Practically speaking, it is essential that the same operator provide the services on both sides of the river.

Let me explain. The American side has an area which is only large enough to support a landing that facilitates the loading and unloading of passengers. All overnight mooring and winter dry docking, as well as all major repairs and maintenance, must be done on the Canadian side. The issues, however, go well beyond docking. This is a unique bi-national operation. We have worked very hard over the years to ensure our operation adheres to all Transport Canada and United States Department of Homeland Security requirements. Ripley Entertainment and Alcatraz Media are wrong to assume that either of these agencies would simply rubber stamp a major change in the way the boats are operated, and by whom.



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Perhaps the most surprising of the public commentary by Ripley Entertainment and Alcatraz Media is their talk of wanting to operate boats at the base of the Falls daily during night-time, and seasonally right up until just before the ice bridge begins to form. I believe these comments more than any other demonstrate how little they understand about Niagara Falls and how little they have thought through their ideas.

As most people know, in addition to creating a beautiful scene for tourists, the water which runs down the Niagara River is used to generate critical hydro electric power for both Ontario and New York State.

The Niagara River Water Diversion Treaty between Canada and the United States (1950) established the amount of water that can be diverted from the Niagara River by both countries for the purpose of generating hydroelectric power. This also established how much water travels over the Falls, which in turn determines when the Maid of the Mist boats are able to operate.

On a daily basis, between the hours of 9:00pm and 9:00am, and seasonally, between November 1<sup>st</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup>, the amount of water that flows over the Falls is reduced by 50%. As a result, the water level beneath the Falls is drastically reduced by as much as 12 feet in the evening hours and after November 1<sup>st</sup>, exposing the boats to many more rocks and unpredictable water currents that simply do not exist while our boats are operating. The Maid of the Mist boats have been operating safely for 163 years. We have no desire to expose our passengers to conditions which we consider to be unsafe.

Both Ripley Entertainment and Alcatraz Media would have the public believe that the Maid of the Mist operates as a seasonal attraction by choice rather than by circumstance, and that somehow we are providing a disservice to the traveling public by not operating in the winter or during the night-time.

Another piece of misinformation being spread that is particularly disturbing and needs to be corrected is with respect to accessibility. I am pleased to report that all parts of the Maid of the Mist tour are both wheelchair and stroller accessible and have been for



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decades. The Maid of the Mist was presented the Accessibility Niagara Award by the Ontario March of Dimes at a public ceremony in 2006. We were recognized for operating a business that was fully accessible to the traveling public. At the same ceremony the Maid of the Mist received certificates from the City of Niagara Falls, the City of St. Catharines, the Province of Ontario, and the Government of Canada

Minister, we are very proud of the Maid of the Mist's 163 year record of success making it one of the world's most recognizable tourism brand names.

There are many reasons why the Maid of the Mist has been voted the #1 Tourist Attraction by the readers of the Niagara Falls Review as part of The Review's Reader's Choice Awards program. The program started in 1997, and we have won the award every year for 12 consecutive years.

My goal in writing this letter wasn't to outline all of the reasons why we think the public keeps putting us at the top of their list. I wanted the opportunity to set the record straight on some of the misinformation that is being circulated by those with a vested interest in talking down one of North America's most successful tourism operations, and who continue to oversimplify what would be a very detrimental transition for both the tourism industry in Niagara Falls, and the traveling public from around the world.

The Maid of the Mist and the Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) have had a historical relationship that has existed for over 100 years. Although there are some in the community that do not understand this, the senior management of the NPC and the majority of the Niagara Park's Commissioners do. They are very aware of the unique circumstances, such as those discussed above, under which the Maid of the Mist operates boat tours to the base of Niagara Falls.

We consider our relationship with the NPC to be a partnership. The NPC has always been, and will continue to be directly involved in all decisions that affect both of our organizations.



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We understand the Integrity Commissioner is currently reviewing a complaint which questioned the process under which our lease with the Niagara Parks Commission was renewed. We look forward to her findings, just as we look forward to pleasing the millions of tourists from across the globe who come to Niagara Falls and want to take a ride on the world famous Maid of the Mist.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Ruddy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tim Ruddy  
Vice President, Marketing

c.c.: Ms. Lynn Morrison  
Integrity Commissioner (Acting), Office of the Integrity Commissioner

Mr. Drew Fagan  
Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ontario Ministry of Tourism

Mr. Jim Williams  
Chairman, Niagara Parks Commission