

## **US Customs Pre-Clearance – Belleville International Terminal Security**

Canada's economic trade viability relies significantly on a number of gateways, major land and sea border crossings, where transportation networks converge to connect centres of economic activity.

Gateways to Canada include approximately 300 commercial sea ports, over 20 major airports, and a large number of land border crossings, 18 of which are major trade gateways. The Belleville International Terminal in Victoria, British Columbia is one example of a gateway connecting the leisure travellers of the United States and Canada.

It is of paramount importance to ensure that appropriate capacity and infrastructure improvements are adopted at all necessary crossings. In the post 9/11 world, appropriate capacity includes not only infrastructure considerations but also high-level security measures.

The United States is Canada's primary trading partner, and as such, it behooves the Canadian government to work in harmony with US officials and provincial governments on security measures.

Ballantyne and Canada Place in Vancouver, both cruise terminal sites with US preclearance service, each have modern facilities with adequate pre-clearance services with no expressed concerns from the US Customs and Border Protection Agency. While important at commercial crossings, it is equally important to be vigilant in border security and infrastructure investment at gateway locations with a concentration of leisure travellers.

The US Customs and Border Protection Agency (CBP) have a number of Preclearance locations around the world, one of which is the Belleville International Terminal in Victoria, BC. In a letter written on the issue of the terminals condition in 2006, the US CBP advised that the terminals in Victoria "lack an infrastructure necessary to maintain passenger sterility and vessel security" and expressed concern that this situation had been a long time issue in Victoria without a proposed solution.

In the event that the Belleville Terminal is not upgraded and brought into compliance with international safety standards and requirements of the Department of Homeland Security, the Agency has stated that "a withdrawal of Preclearance services at Victoria must be considered". Clearly, the status quo at this terminal site is untenable and clearly does not support a strategic alliance with our US partners.

The potential loss of preclearance services at Belleville International Terminal would have a significant impact on the economy of Vancouver Island and the tourism industry of British Columbia. The terminal, which covers a land mass of 6.5 acres, provides international foot passenger ferry service to various destinations in Washington State and international vehicle ferry service to Port Angeles. In 2005, the terminal welcomed 1.1 million return foot passengers and 175,000 return vehicle trips. A marine transportation done in that same year by Moffat and Nichol showed an increase in traffic projections for 2010 to be 1.2 million return foot passengers and 188,000 return vehicle passengers.

The Belleville Terminal Preclearance site is one of only a few marine based site in the country. The majority of CBP Preclearance locations in Canada are at International airports. The airport facilities were all originally built and funded with initial investment by the federal government with some costs recouped through airport improvement fees. Airports were subsequently transferred to Airport Authorities. In contrast, the Belleville International Terminal has operated with little government support from any level. Unfortunately, its current status reflects that funding reality.

As the Belleville Terminal is an international border crossing, its infrastructure and security requirements are clearly within the mandate of federal responsibilities. However, due to the devolution of the terminal to the province of BC, the federal government has not supported the infrastructure needs of this location. However, the fact that the terminal location is owned by the province of BC should not in any way diminish the federal responsibility for infrastructure funding as it pertains to international security requirements. The terminal is currently managed through the Provincial Capital Commission, a crown corporation of the provincial government.

There have been numerous studies concerning the redevelopment of the terminal over the last decade. One study in 2005 put the infrastructure redevelopment cost estimates between 40 and 50 million dollars, with real estate development on top of that. Another task force put forward a proposed vision with similar cost projections. However the concept of redevelopment has never been sent out as a request for proposal with concrete cost projections.

The redevelopment of Belleville International Terminal is a project of considerable size and would need to be accomplished through a partnership with the province of British Columbia. For its part, the project may qualify for federal funding under the Building Canada Fund, a fund for federal investment of \$33 billion dollars over seven years, through to 2014.

Canada's commitment to security is an important indication of our strategic partnership with the United States. In order for Belleville International Terminal, which poorly represents the capital of British Columbia, to be an international standard transportation portal and safe gateway, infrastructure and security investment is hastily required. A partnership is required between the federal government of Canada on this international border crossing and the provincial government of British Columbia who owns the terminal property to bring the facility up to date and ensure many more years of secure service for Vancouver Island.

### **Recommendations**

That the federal government:

1. Partner with the government of BC to develop the Victoria marine pre-clearance site at Belleville International Terminal as a model for future marine facilities in Canada;
2. Examine other marine based pre-clearance sites to ensure they also meet US infrastructure and security requirements.