

BOUNDARY BAY CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

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Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Project (#80054)
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“Now is our last chance to get the future right”

(Quote from Ronald Wright: *A Short History of Progress* Massey Lectures 2004)

RE: Closing Remarks from the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee

Dear Panel Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to “Closing Remarks” on the Terminal 2 proposal on Roberts Bank (RBT2) in the heart of the internationally recognized Fraser River Estuary ecosystem and the most important wildlife area in Canada especially for salmon, Orcas and many species of birds, especially globe-trotting migrant shorebirds.

Over its 30 years the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee (BBCC) has worked to enhance public awareness of the world class Fraser River Estuary Ecosystem and helped to obtain international recognition and protection.

The BBCC has made many written submissions and several of us presented to you at the Public Hearing (May-June 2019) into the Environmental Assessment of the RBT2 project. Previously, the BBCC obtained participant funding and hired consultants to review the environmental issues associated with the Deltaport Third Berth expansion. We produced a 225-page report: *Review of the Vancouver Port Authority’s Environmental Assessment Application for the Deltaport Third Berth Project on Roberts Bank in Delta, BC* in 2005.

Conclusion of BBCC

The Public Hearings in May and June clearly and repeatedly demonstrated that the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority’s (VFPA) consultants have under estimated many important environmental impacts of RBT2. But independent and government scientists presented data that suggested significant adverse environmental impacts are likely from this development and these could have serious effects that cannot be mitigated. So the **BBCC’s concludes that the proposed RBT2 Project must not be built on Roberts Bank**

because it could be the tipping point for the Roberts Bank ecosystem.

Recommendations to the Panel

The BBCC notes that the **VFPA has not done what has been requested of it over the last 40 years of port development on Roberts Bank**. BBCC recommends that the Panel direct the VFPA to complete projects that have been requested by the responsible agencies and previous review panels (see specific suggestions below).

Noting first that in **1979**, a CEAA Panel *“concluded that the potential impacts on the Fraser River estuary ... are too great to recommend that the port expansion be approved as proposed. The extent and ecological significance of the Fraser River estuary, particularly its use by fish and wildlife, make it Unique in North America.”*

Cumulative Effects:

1. **BBCC recommends** that the Panel request of the VFPA that no more port expansion take place on Roberts Bank and that an independent, comprehensive, scientifically credible, cumulative effects study be done. Otherwise, we run the risk of more piecemeal development exacerbating past cumulative effects that could precipitate collapse of this vital ecosystem that would be an environmental catastrophe with global consequences.

(i) On January 21, **1992**: S.A. Macfarlane (DFO): **"Prior to any further action on this application, I suggest immediate discussion by the Environmental Review Committee with a view to directing a review and summary by an independent, competent scientific authority for overall cumulative effects of: a) Both causeways, b) Subsequent expansions and c) Compensatory action efforts and results"**. And

ii) On February 11, **1992**: Adrian Duncan (EC): **"It is the position of this committee that measures are needed to gain a better understanding of the cumulative impacts which may now be occurring at and adjacent to the Roberts Bank site as a result of the original port expansion and Ferry Terminal expansion and which may occur as a result of the container terminal development"**.

2. **Inter-causeway Erosion: BBCC recommends** that the Panel **request a process for evaluating inter-causeway erosion** and its consequent risk to the Tsawwassen First Nation, the citizens of Delta and vital intertidal mudflat habitats.

iii) **On April 27, 2005**: EC stated that it **“has substantive concerns with the Deltaport Third Berth proposal, in particular because of the risk that it will act cumulatively and**

negatively with existing project impacts upon the marine habitat and fish and wildlife assemblages of Roberts Bank ... They go on to state that lack of data on the inter-causeway means they cannot assess the cumulative impact of the development proposal on possible eutrophication of this area **“if it does occur, the state of eutrophication is predicted to result in such massive environmental change between the causeways that there would be public outrage as well as agency embarrassment on an international scale”**.

Mitigation Actions: that have been mandated but not addressed by the VFPA over the last 40 years include:

3. **Fish Passage through the Causeways: BBCC recommends** that the Panel request the VFPA address the long standing need for fish passage through the causeways.
4. **Bird Mortality from overhead wires: BBCC recommends** that the Panel request that the VFPA remove the hazard of overhead wires along the causeway that are in the direct path of bird movements between the intertidal mudflat habitats on Roberts Bank.

The Port’s own Project Environmental Review Panel Report (1996) clearly stated what should be done about the transmission lines on Roberts Bank: **“The Panel believes that ongoing mortality of birds is unacceptable”** Specifically in Recommendation # 4 they said that partners on Roberts Bank **“develop and implement a strategy and phase out overhead power lines on the Roberts Bank causeway by the year 2002.”**

5. **Reduce the glare from overhead lights: BBCC recommends** that the Panel request a full light pollution mitigation plan, including immediate installation of overhead deflectors to reduce night sky glare and its human and wildlife effects.
6. **Air Quality Monitoring: BBCC recommends** that the Panel instruct the VFPA **Restore the PM10 and PM2.5 air quality monitors** on Roberts Bank.

The Port’s 1996 Review Panel in Recommendation #6 stated that all partners on Roberts Bank **“immediately undertake an emissions inventory and analysis of dust samples in the Roberts Bank area to establish baseline information on emission levels and their sources”**.

And the Port’s Panel recommended (#7) that all partners **“arrange with the GVRD to re-establish air quality monitoring station(s) in the vicinity of Roberts Bank in support of long-term air quality modeling and monitoring”**. The previous monitoring station was removed when the Ferry Terminal was expanded

7. **Ramsar Designation of Roberts Bank: BBCC recommends** that the Panel get this vital site added immediately (8 year delay) to the Fraser River Delta Ramsar site.

The **Ramsar nomination:** process was begun in **2010** after Delta Council endorsed the application on September 13. The Report suggested that the provincial Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) within the Fraser River estuary be included with Burns Bog.

The report lists the WMAs as “Boundary Bay, Sturgeon Bank, South Arm Marshes **and the future Roberts Bank WMA**”. So from the outset of the Ramsar process Roberts Bank was included.

The Roberts Bank WMA was finally declared in **2011**; it had been delayed for a decade after the Management Plan for the WMA was signed and it now had large holes in it allowing for Port expansion. It begs ecological credibility that the responsible agencies carved out large holes in a continuous, marine, tidal foreshore environment to allow port activity in the Roberts Bank WMA.

Accountability to local and global ecosystem initiatives –

a. International Consultation and Accountability for the Salish Sea

8. **Salish Sea Joint Ecosystem Initiatives: BBCC recommends** that the Panel demonstrate that the USA and Canadian governments have fulfilled their fiduciary responsibilities in addressing the trans-boundary environmental challenges of our shared Salish Sea ecosystem.

The Salish Sea is home to the iconic endangered population of Southern Resident Orcas that feed off Roberts Bank in the Georgia Strait and can spend at least half the year in **Orca Pass** between the Canadian Gulf Islands and the American San Juan Islands.

Even though Orca Pass is in the center of the shipping route to and from Roberts Bank ports, we could not find evidence of consultations between the joint partners (USA and Canada) on the impacts of Roberts Bank expansion, especially increased shipping, on the shared waterway leading to increased noise, light and air pollution from ships, trucks and trains in the Salish Sea/Georgia Basin waterway and air shed. In addition to the Orcas, there were **125 species at risk in the Salish Sea** (as of December 1, 2015).

There are several relevant trans boundary agreements and mechanisms relevant to these responsibilities such as the *Canada-United States Statement of Cooperation on the Georgia Basin-Puget Sound Ecosystem*, the *United States-Canada Air Quality Agreement*, and the *British Columbia-Washington State Environmental Cooperation Council*.

We understand that their **current (2017-2020) Action Plan** focuses on:

- a. **Promoting information exchange and coordination**, including the *Health of the Salish Sea Ecosystem Report* and the *Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference*.
- b. **Supporting coordination and information sharing** at the tribal/First Nation, state/provincial, and federal levels.
- c. **Support information sharing activities relating to major federal initiatives and environmental assessments.**

b. Global Warming the precautionary principle – selection of best shipping route

9. **Canada West Coast Ports Evaluation: BBCC recommends** that the Panel initiate an exemplary, expert, independent, scientific evaluation of the **best port location on BC's west coast to minimize global warming effects, reduce environmental risks and accommodate incremental port development as needed for Pacific trade.**

E.g. Prince Rupert Port, due to the curvature of the earth, is the **closest port to Asian** markets so has a day shorter shipping time, hence less fuel consumption, smaller carbon footprint and less air pollution than Vancouver ports.

E.g. Prince Rupert Port has **direct entry from the Pacific Ocean** at reduced risk to the environment from accidents compared with the long, narrow, busy and hazardous shipping route through the Canadian Gulf Islands and the American San Juan Islands of the Salish Sea to Vancouver's ports.

E.g. Prince Rupert Port has **less congestion** at the port and on the railway so reduced transport and less air pollution than Vancouver's Lower Mainland restricted air-shed.

E.g. From Prince Rupert Port containers bound for the USA go straight onto trains for shipment compared to many truck shipments from Vancouver with the concomitant congestion and air pollution. **Can most USA bound containers go to Prince Rupert?**

E.g. Prince Rupert Port has successfully grown incrementally as container shipping demand increased; **perhaps it can accommodate more sustainably any future need?**

The ecological treasure of the Roberts Bank ecosystem is already under stress from past port developments. Doubling the port on Roberts Bank will exacerbate cumulative effects of previous developments and could precipitate collapse of this vital ecosystem resulting in an **environmental catastrophe with global consequences.**

<Original signed by>

Yours sincerely,

Mary Taitt, Director, BBCC