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MEMBER OF THE FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

THE MONTREAL BOARD OF TRADE

MONTREAL June 10, 1936.

Right Honourable Arthur Meighen, P.C.,
House of Commons, Ottawa.

Sir: National Harbour Board Bill

With regard to the National Harbour Board Bill, passed by the House of Commons, and now before the Senate, I am directed to advise you that the Council of this Board has, on several occasions since Sir Alexander Gibb reported on his survey of the National Ports of the Dominion in 1932, urged on the Federal Government the carrying out of his recommendation that a Central Harbour Board be set up to administer the principal seaports of this country.

This Bill conforms to our past representations in principle. The two features in which it does not so conform are, First, there is no assurance in the Bill that a Central Harbour Board of the character and type recommended in the Gibb report is to be appointed. This is considered vital to the satisfactory operation of the Central Harbour Board. It is, perhaps, not illogical to infer that the present Central Harbour Board, composed of Government officials, will be replaced as promptly as possible by a Board composed of outstanding business men of proven executive ability, but it is our Council's opinion that this point should be made clear. Second, there is no provision for the setting up, in the various ports, of local Advisory Councils as contemplated by Sir Alexander Gibb. If provisions were made for setting up such local Councils, under the Chairmanship of the Port Managers, the objections from certain quarters might be removed, but in such case only advisory powers should be accorded the Councils, which should not be allowed to interfere with or control the administration of their local ports. In the opinion of our Council, however, the appointment of such local Councils is relatively unimportant if the Central Board is of the right calibre, and capable Port Managers are appointed.

The Council of this Board earnestly hopes that the National Harbours Bill, subject, perhaps to more definite provision as to the appointment of the Central Board and the character and standing of its members, will be approved by the Senate as affording a reasonable hope of improved administration of all ports in Canada, and the elimination of the power of local authorities to indulge in unfair competition and to expend public money to a degree not warranted by their contribution to the efficient and economical handling of the import and export trade of Canada.

I am, Sir,

Yours obediently,

J. Stanley Cook
Secretary.

JSC/EW

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