

108 High St.,
Fort Erie, Ont.
Mar. 20th., 1980.

Dear Girve:

As unofficial historian of the Town of Fort Erie, I feel compelled to write you on this Historical week !

" PRESIDENT CARTER HAS IMPOSSED AN EXTRA 10 CENTS A-GALLON TAX ON GASOLINE, raising the price to the equivalent of \$ 1.68 Canadian per imperial gallon. " THANK YOU AMERICA.

Have you any idea what this means to the people of Fort Erie? I have taken several pictures of the situation as it is at present ; however feel the urgency to write rather than wait till I have them developed. It is almost impossible for the local people to get any service whatsoever at the pumps, because of the large lineups. This has been going on since early last summer, and I wasn't alone when looking forward to labour day, and the end of the Tourist season and a return to normal. Instead, things have steadily worsened. The traffic has become so congested that they are lining up in the traffic lanes on # 3 Highway by the entrance to the Peace Bridge. Eventually the Police force got around to ticketing the cars. This led to a discussion on one of the Buffalo T.V. stations , that was anything but favourable to the local view-point. As the police moved to other locations, and other priorities, more and more cars crossed the Bridge and joined in the line-ups.

In the South end of Town the situation is no better. The majority of garages only give 10/percent on American money, and our American visitors make their first stop the bank. The line-ups at the Bank of Commerce at the foot of Princess st. are no shorter than those at the pumps. At opening time and lunch hours, they have

had to resort to one teller for the local customers, and the others for American Exchange. It is almost impossible to get into the Bank, because of the number of people blocking the doorway. Not only is this an unsafe Safety practise, but they have had to go as far as posting a notice during the winter months" Please keep the door closed".

Any employee that has only a half hour lunch period, and wishes to do some needed banking, had better stay away from this place. Princess St. itself, is no better! The north side is used for parking, and the line-ups at the corner garage opposite, continue along the south side and often to Waterloo St. There is little room for passing traffic.

After numerous complaints a number of the garages have had to set up a traffic flow pattern at their entrances. It has helped some; but there are still customers that will try to cut into the line, and others that take up a good portion of the passing roadways. I have spent up to one hour and a half trying to get gas, and have resorted to late evening hours or filling up in the early morning before seven. This is not always possible for working couples. Many are finding it less frustrating to drive to Stevensville for their gas, but why should they be forced to travel out of town. Our American visitors cross the Bridge on almost empty tanks, which furthers the delay at the pumps. Not content with a full tank, they often bring along two large drums which they have filled and transport back to the U.S.A. in their trunks. I do not have to tell you that the Government is subsidizing this gas, however is it necessary for our money to be spent subsidizing the northern half of N.Y. State.

Already a number of the garages on the Garrison Road are using their July allotment. What will happen when summer arrives, and we have our regular influx of tourists? Now that the track has the go ahead for another year, will all it's customers stop at the pumps before or after the races.

There are people in Town that feel Fort Erie is getting a lot of business from the added traffic and that it well makes up for the inconveniences at the pumps. At the Mall a good number of the parked cars are American. The A & P has never seen so much American money in their tills for years. However we must remember that when the Banks are closed they are open, and unlike the garages they are giving fifteen % on American money. They have also had to come up with a policy, for American customers were purchasing goods amounting to no more than \$1,00 and asking change of a twenty dollar bill. Do we need this kind of added business?

There must be some solution to this problem effecting all of us in the Town of Fort Erie; and I hope that you as a former Townsman will work diligently and with haste to alleviate this unfortunate situation.

A concerned motorist:::

Louis Mc. Dermott

108 High St.,
Fort Erie Ont.

Mar. 22nd. 1980.

Dear Stella:::

Enclosed you will find a letter I am sending to the Hon. Girve Fretz, Ray Hagerty, the Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce, and before I am through, I will no doubt drop a copy off to several of the local papers, and if I get no result Channel 7 in Buffalo.

Perhaps the Hot Line on that station, would cover the gas CRISIS in Fort Erie for that is exactly what it is! I am surprised that I have not seen more action from you, or the Council.

The Tourist Group, which I have worked with in my own way, and whom I have always figured was doing a good job, seem to be more concerned with bringing in more visitors to the area. If they are from a place other than New York State, they will leave in a hurry when they see the gas lines at the pumps. Was it not that way, during the recent Hockey Tournament when we had so many people from other parts of Ontario?

If something is not done soon, before the regular summer crowds & the Race Track followers add to the number we already have; there is bound to be a real outcry from the people of Fort Erie. They must be given consideration first, no matter how, it is accomplished!

Consider the business men that charge their customers \$12.00 or \$14.00 an hour, electricians, plumbers etc; waiting in line at the pumps for anywhere up to 3/4 of an hour. Others like doctors, and nurses, even the local Florist people, that have to fill up on a regular bases. Working women that must fill up on a lunch hour or before they return home at night, have also had to put up with these impossible delays at the pumps.

At a number of the Banks the lineups are almost as bad. The Bank of Commerce in the South end has had to have one teller for local customers and the others for American Exchange. It is still almost impossible to get into the building for the number of American customers in front of the doorway. Has no one thought of the poor Safety practises? They have had to set up this procedure at the Bank of Nova Scotia at the Mall, however people are still breaking into the lines. Must we believe that all this Canadian money is being spent in Fort Erie, or are they saving it for another fill up at the tanks? Granted, the south end restaurants are doing great, but they always have, and have even managed to expand. I for one, am not concerned with those visitors that come over to gas up and lunch at the King Edward. Parking is bad enough there, now that they are charging, on the lot by the old Parway Theater. As I told Girve, Princess St. is hopeless! It is amazing that there has not been more accidents. Almost all of the garages are on corners, and customers hang out into the intersection waiting to jump into line. One risk his or her life on the Garrison. Not only are the cars in the south lane of traffic, now they are often seen on the north side, and it is not uncommon for a American car to dart across a major highway to get in the other lane. After filling up at Shulars, many of the cars perform an illegal U turn, in their haste to get back across the Bridge. Granted, the police have been ticketing a number of the cars, and what an uproar that made on American T.V. Why should we have to pay our police force to take on this added work, when we well know they are needed elsewhere.

Are there no regulations that can be made to alleviate this situation? We have to start somewhere, or all our efforts to attract visitors to the Town will have been in vain.

Hoping that you will see, this letter gets every consideration and that some kind of action on it, becomes TOP PRIORITY !

A CONCERNED FORT ERIAN:::
Louis Mc. Dermott

108 High St.,
Fort Erie Ont.
Mar. 23rd. 80.

Dear Mr. Haggerty:::

Enclosed you will find a letter I have written to Girve Fretz as representative of this area; concerning the Gas Crisis in Fort Erie, and it is certainly that!

Who's responsibility it is Federal, Provincial or that of the Town, will no doubt be a long waiting decision, apparently it already has. This problem has been steadily getting worse since last summer. Everyone hoped that with the coming of Labour Day and the fall season, things would get back to normal. Even though there was no shortage of gas in the Buffalo area, they were paying the highest price per. gallon in the U.S.A. and this added to the low Canadian dollar, it has made it quite profitable to shop Canadian. When gas policies are made by the Government, is there any thought of what it does to the border towns.

Those Americans close to the border could care less that Carter is going to raise their gas rates by ten cents a gallon, when all they have to do is CROSS OVER THE BRIDGE. No doubt this will become the theme song for the people of N.Y. State, and if you haven't seen troubled waters get down to Fort Erie proper, any day any hour.

Why should the local people have to put up with these inconveniences? I have sent copies of this letter to the Mayor, and to the Chamber of Commerce as well as Girve and yourself hoping that together or singularly someone will be able to do something. The situation is getting no better, and with spring just around the corner, it is bound to get worse! The waits at the pump now are up to 50 mint. long, and I hate to think what it will be like when the race track crowd the summer visitors and those from across the river that have already made a weekly visit to our gas pumps a ritual, all get-together.

Eventually it is going to turn people away from the area, and unfortunately a good many of the people of Fort Erie, will be praising the day!

Hoping that you will get at this problem without delay, for the majority of the people in Fort Erie, have about lost all their patience . We need our American visitors, but we do not want to become second class citizens in our own land.

Sincerely yours:

A CONCERNED MOTORIST:::

Louis Mc. Dermott.

108 High St.,
Fort Erie, Ont.

Mar. 23, 80.

Dear Mr. Hagan:::

Enclosed you will find a copy of a letter I have sent to Girve Fretz M.P. in hopes that he will be able to bring up the matter of the Gas Crisis in Fort Erie and that something can be done about it. Just who's responsibility it is, Federal or Provincial is any ones guess, and no doubt it involves a lot of other people like the Customs and the Police department. Everyone you meet is talking about the great inconveniences, but nobody seems to be doing anything to help the people of Fort Erie. I gather a number of enraged people showed up at the Council one night to voice their opinion. It seems all the Mayor was concerned with was the safety on the Garrison. Granted this is one of the problems; but I do not have to tell you what it is like to wait up till almost an hour at the pump, like a good many people have had to do. It has become such a waist of time that local customers have begun taking their business to Stevesville, and I am not against that , but why should we have to?

Consider the business men in town that have to fill up on a regular bases, like the plumbers, the electricians , even the local Florists and of course doctors & nurses etc. All these people get well over twelve or fifteen dollars an hour , and cannot afford the time spent at the pumps. I get a half hour for lunch, so filling up then is out of the question and around supper time is no better! To avoid the line ups one has to get there in the morning when the pumps open up, or late at night, hoping all the while that the garage has not sold it's quota.

I have always helped the Tourist Bureau with their projects

in the past , and will continue to do so;;but the people of Fort Erie must come first. What will happen when the regular summer crowd adds to these long line ups , and surely those attending the race track are not going to return to the U.S.A. without gassing up. Can we then expect our visitors to stay over a few days, or will they continue on, more quickly than at present. The money is not staying in Fort Erie as this group would lead one to believe. The A. & P. has granted, more American money in their tills than they have had since last summer. Customers are making purchases of just over \$1.00 and asking Canadian change for a \$20.00 bill so they can get the fifteen percent exchange. I cannot for a moment see any of these visitors buying groceries here, at a greater cost than they can get them at home. They would be waisting the money they save on their gas purchases. The restaurants in the South end are doing great, and they always have, and without this crush they have been able to expand on a large scale.

Let us put our priorities where they belong, with the people of the Town first! I have snet a copy of this letter to Mayor Stella Ziff and also to Ray Haggerty, and the original to Girve Fretz.

I hope that you as president of the Chamber of Commerce will make known the views of the people of this town, and I do not stand alone condemming these inconveiences. I have been asked by others at Horton Steel, to make this an open letter and have everyone sign, and if nothing comes of my efforts to date, no doubt this will be the next move.

Sincerely: A Conserved Fort Erie Motorist
Yours.

Louis Mc. Dermott



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

GIRVE FRETZ, M.P.
(Erie)
Room 356 West Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A7
613 992 8865

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE
12 Clarence Street
P.O. Box 582
Port Colborne, Ontario
L3K 3E8
416 835 2771

OTTAWA
March 28, 1980

Mr. Louis McDermott
108 High Street
Fort Erie, Ontario
L2A 3P7

Dear Mr. McDermott:

Thank you for your interesting letter of
March 20, 1980, concerning the gas situation.

I have taken the liberty of forwarding a
copy of your letter to the Minister of Industry,
Trade and Commerce; the Minister of Energy,
Mines and Resources; and the Minister of
State for External Affairs, for their comments.

When responses to the above letters have
been received I shall be in touch with you
again.

Yours sincerely,

for
Girve Fretz, M. P.

meb



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

March 31, 1980.

Mr. Louis H. McDermott,
108 High Street,
FORT ERIE, Ontario.

Dear Mr. McDermott:

Since receiving copies of your recent "letter to the Editor" (Girve Fretz) I have had the opportunity to meet with Mayor Stella Ziff on March 14, 1980. Like many of us, she is also concerned about the problem of Americans purchasing gasoline in Fort Erie as well as several other points of entry in Canada.

The meeting consisted of the Mayor, Regional Police, the Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce, myself - and service station operators were also invited to attend but due to circumstances were not present - all trying to resolve some of the issues that are affecting town residents.

You are correct in saying that Canadians are subsidizing Americans - by 75¢ on every gallon of petrol which they purchase in Canada. You might be interested to know that Peace Bridge traffic is up considerably from the January to March period of last year. Figures from January 1, 1980 to March 14, 1980 are estimated at approximately 500000 in excess of last year's three month figures. This means that millions of gallons of gasoline are leaving Canada while Canadians are about to face another cost increase in the hope of reducing the energy crisis.

Police records indicate that 103 charges have been laid under the Highway Traffic Act although only one vehicle accident.

It was suggested at the meeting that stronger law enforcement efforts are necessary to control traffic violations and to improve the flow of traffic. Signs have been requested and installed prohibiting parking and standing of vehicles in certain areas of the municipality.

Mr. Louis H. McDermott.

March 31, 1980.

It was also discussed that signs be erected at certain intersections advising Americans that gasoline purchases could be made at outlets other than in the town, such as Ridgeway, Crystal Beach, Stevensville and Crescent Park. Also it was thought that Chamber of Commerce involvement and the cooperation of the service station operators could reduce the present problems in certain areas.

To offset the disadvantage of losing a considerable amount of our depleting resources, it was felt that perhaps proper advertising could turn an advantage in increased business to other sectors of Fort Erie - certainly stores, restaurants, recreational facilities etcetera, could use a boost in tourist dollars.

The question of who should be responsible for controlling the sale of petrol to non-Canadians is a federal government matter and I recall a newsletter from an area M.P. in late 1979 in which he strongly supported the sale of petrol to Americans as this would bring in additional revenues to the federal government. But seriously, I do believe that some control measures should be implemented and one that was suggested was the issuance of gas ration coupons to Canadians.

The Canadian Manufacturing Association in the Globe and Mail of March 27th suggested higher gas prices for Canadians to conserve energy. I don't agree with this proposal however as I believe that Canadians are trying using less gasoline, turning to smaller automobiles etcetera. But if this continued give-away of inexpensive gasoline to our American neighbours is allowed to carry on, it will certainly seem that Canadians are not that interested in conserving energy.

I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of your views to the Cabinet Minister responsible for such matters at the federal level of government.

Thank you for taking the time to advise me of your concern.

Yours truly,



Ray Haggerty, M.P.P.,
Riding of Erie.

RH/cm

STELLA ZIFF
MAYOR



200 Jarvis Street,
Fort Erie, Ontario
L2A 2S6
Telephone (416) 871-1600

April 14, 1980

Mr. Louis McDermott
108 High Street
Fort Erie, Ontario

Dear Louis:

Thank you for your letter of March 27, 1980, enclosing a copy of a letter written by you to Mr. Girve Fretz, M.P., Erie Riding.

This Municipality has absolutely no jurisdiction with regard to the gas lines in Town. The Niagara Regional Police and the O.P.P. are responsible for enforcing the Highway Traffic Act and I have been working with the Region to make it easier for this Act to be applied. As Mayor, I have no authority to dictate to private enterprises, how to conduct their business. By and large the gas station operators in the vicinity of the Peace Bridge have been very co-operative in regulating traffic in and out of their stations. There are some physical limitations however, which I am sure you are very well aware.

I am forwarding your correspondence and a copy of my reply to the Chamber of Commerce for any comments they may wish to make.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stella", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Stella Ziff
Mayor

SZ:mb

cc: Chamber of Commerce



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

GIRVE FRETZ, M.P.
(Erie)
Room 356 West Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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613 992 8865

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P.O. Box 582
Port Colborne, Ontario
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416 835 2771

OTTAWA
May 1, 1980

Mr. Louis McDermott
108 High Street
Fort Erie, Ontario
L2A 3P7

Dear Mr. McDermott:

With reference to my letter to you of March 28, 1980, I am now in receipt of replies from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, and the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Both letters are self-explanatory and I am therefore attaching copies of each for your information.

Upon receipt of a reply from the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, I shall be in touch with you again.

Yours sincerely,

Girve Fretz, M. P.

meb
Encls

24 Erie



Secretary of State for External Affairs

Secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires extérieures

Canada

OTTAWA K1A 0G2.

April 8, 1980

Girve
Dear Mr. Fretz,

The problems in Fort Erie referred to in the attached letter you received from your constituent Mr. Louis McDermott are an unfortunate local side effect of our open border and relatively low gasoline prices in Canada at a time when the U.S. Government is gradually decontrolling its oil prices and increasing its gasoline prices to encourage conservation.

I believe Mr. McDermott would agree that Canadians and Americans as a whole would oppose one Government or the other imposing extraordinary restrictions on their movements across the border. Nor do we in Canada have grounds to interfere in the domestic pricing policies of the U.S. Government as it responds to the energy crisis, any more than we would tolerate United States interference in the pricing policies of Canada. In short, we cannot rightly blame the U.S. Government for the inconveniences reported in Fort Erie.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, of course, has responsibility for determining whether the current differential in Canadian and United States gasoline prices is leading to serious abuse of the situation by U.S. citizens other than legitimate tourists, harming Canadian supplies at indirect cost to the Canadian tax-payer. I have therefore passed a copy of your letter to Mr. Lalonde's office, and would urge that you await his reply before replying to Mr. McDermott.

Yours sincerely,

Mark MacGuigan

Mr. Girve Fretz, M.P.,
(Erie),
House of Commons,
Room 356, West Block,
OTTAWA.

RECEIVED / REÇU

1980 APR 9

HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES



Energy, Mines and
Resources Canada

Energie, Mines et
Ressources Canada

Minister

Ministre

Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0E4

30 AVR. 1980

Mr. Girve Fretz, M. P.,
(Erie),
Room 356 West Block,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0A7.

Dear Mr. Fretz:

Thank you for your letter of March 28, 1980 in which you requested comments on the increase of Americans buying gasoline at Canadian border cities so that you could satisfactorily reply to Mr. L. McDermott's letter on this matter.

The situation has been brought to my attention previously and officials of my Department have begun monitoring the instances and patterns of "same day border crossings for 1980 versus 1979" by Americans to buy Canadian gasoline. Various methods of controlling and/or curtailing this practice without impeding the legitimate tourist business are being studied by the Department.

I would also like to assure you that the extra demand which the Americans have placed on gasoline supplies has in no way jeopardized the availability of supply to Canadians. The additional volume so far has been estimated at only 0.5% of total domestic gasoline consumption. It is unfortunate, however, that the situation is causing significant inconveniences at the pumps in the form of line-ups and traffic jams.

I hope that these comments will allow you to satisfactorily respond to Mr. McDermott and to assure him that the situation is being attended to.

Yours sincerely,

Marc Lalonde.

