

**Québec is allocating \$52.5 million to the
development of international cruises on the St. Lawrence River**

Québec City, May 8, 2008. – Minister of Tourism and Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade Raymond Bachand today unveiled the *Stratégie de développement durable et de promotion des croisières internationales sur le Saint-Laurent*. Minister Bachand made this important announcement accompanied by the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, federal Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Ross Gaudreault, President and CEO of the Québec Port Authority, and Priscilla Nemey, Vice-President of the Association des croisières du Saint-Laurent (ACSL).

The strategy, awaited by the tourism industry, centres on partnership and the twofold objective of increasing tourism revenues in Québec and diversifying and stimulating regional economies through the creation or consolidation of businesses devoted to the reception of new international clientele. It is based on the consultations conducted among the key partners concerned by international cruises, in particular federal and provincial government departments and agencies, municipal and port officials, and stakeholders in the tourism industry, including the ACSL.

“The development of port visits of international calibre along the St. Lawrence River and in Saguenay allows Québec to create wealth through the injection of new money in the economy,” Minister Bachand noted. “*The Stratégie de développement durable et de promotion des croisières internationales sur le Saint-Laurent* will enable us to increase, in particular, the number of American visitors, a priority tourist clientele for Québec,” he added.

The ports of call proposed in the strategy are those that offer the greatest potential, are supported by the communities concerned and have to date initiated an approach or elaborated projects. Saguenay, Sept-Îles, Baie-Comeau, Gaspé, Havre-Saint-Pierre and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine satisfy these criteria.

The development of these new ports of call downstream from Québec City will benefit coastal regions in eastern Québec that are seeking economic renewal activities. The most tangible short-term impact will stem from spending by companies, passengers and crew members during the port visits. Numerous jobs may be created or maintained and unique business opportunities will be available to local enterprises.

The addition of ports of call will enable the St. Lawrence River to set itself apart as a cruise destination and will, as a result, consolidate the Capitale-Nationale’s reputation and maintain that of Montréal. Montréal and Québec City will thus be more likely to become home ports or ports of embarkation and disembarkation. Trois-Rivières will also benefit from the development of cruises on the St. Lawrence.

To cover the entire range of investment needs over the next five years and quickly make Québec a recognized destination, the funding required to implement the strategy is estimated at \$156 million, to be provided through a partnership between the Québec and federal governments and local communities. Québec will contribute \$52.5 million to the implementation of the strategy. Excluding the \$9.8 million already invested in the development of the Quai A.-Lepage in Saguenay, Québec’s investments over the next five years will be on the order of \$42.7 million.

The ministère du Tourisme plans to invest \$34.2 million in new funding in respect of port and tourism infrastructure. Regional offices of the ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale will assume the cost of worker training, estimated at \$2.4 million. The ministère du Tourisme will fund the cost of international promotion, marketing and studies pertaining to port and tourism infrastructure totalling \$6.1 million from its budgets and regular appropriations.

"I have always said that, to increase the use of our embarkation and disembarkation port, we must also develop ports downstream from Québec City. This strategy is being introduced at the right time for the St. Lawrence River overall," Ross Gaudreault, President and CEO of the Québec Port Authority said.

Priscilla Nemey, Vice-President of the ACSL, said she was delighted by the development prospects that the strategy offers the six new ports of call. "There is a great need for this development tool. We have underestimated the keen interest in the St. Lawrence since, starting next year, we will have already doubled the existing clientele and reached our forecasts a year in advance," she added.

The development of this industry in Québec could generate significant economic spinoff. According to a scenario that calls for average annual growth of 17%, Québec could welcome by 2014 nearly 400 000 passenger visits during some 300 port visits. This growth may ultimately generate annual expenditures of roughly \$275 million and enable all of the regions involved to create or maintain numerous jobs. Between 2006 and 2014, overall tourist spending is expected to reach \$1.4 billion.

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Source :

Manuela Goya
Press Officer
Office of the Minister of Economic Development,
Innovation and Export Trade and Minister of
Tourism
418-691-5650