



For Immediate Release

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**Central Elgin officials visit Cleveland**  
*Talks progressing on cross-lake ferry service between  
Cleveland and Port Stanley, Ontario*

**March 30, 2011** – A delegation of officials from Central Elgin, Ontario spent last Friday in Cleveland meeting with Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority officials and others about launching cross-lake ferry service.

Officials from both sides are eager to explore the opportunity and agreed to craft a memorandum of understanding outlining their shared vision and next steps. If a ferry service results it would begin on a pilot basis, operating between Cleveland and Port Stanley with a focus on tourism and other passenger demand.

“We were quite pleased with our discussions and impressed by Cleveland’s many tourist attractions,” said Central Elgin Mayor Bill Walters. “I believe this proposed ferry service would create a wonderful international gateway and cultivate new opportunities for travel and economic development.”

Joining Mayor Walters for the Cleveland visit were: Central Elgin Councillors Russell Matthews and Dan McNeil, Don Leitch, the municipality’s chief administrative officer, and Kate Burns, marketing & communications coordinator for Elgin County. The Municipality of Central Elgin is a rural municipality comprised of a number of communities, including Port Stanley.

Port Authority President and CEO Will Friedman reopened ferry discussions with Central Elgin officials last fall. The service had been contemplated for years, but did not materialize, in part because the Canadian government had not completed a long-awaited transfer of the waterfront property to local control.

Initially the concept was to create a service primarily serving as a short cut for cross-border trucking. The focus is now on tourism, recreation and other passenger demand, with only limited truck traffic. That would allow for a smaller more fuel-efficient ferry that could accommodate passengers and cars as well as bicycles and tour buses.

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The concept fits with a broader vision for the uses of Port Stanley's harbor. Ferry service could also result in increased tourism for other Ontario destinations including London, St. Thomas, Kitchener-Waterloo and Stratford – as well as other destinations in Northeast Ohio.

“Friday's meeting was a great start toward creating a possible new border crossing connecting downtown Cleveland and Ontario,” Friedman said. “We still have a good deal of work to do to make the service a reality. But we share the same goals and vision for the service – and see terrific opportunities for leisure and business travel by boat that we believe residents of Northeast Ohio and Ontario would embrace.”

Friedman and Mayor Walters said a Memorandum of Understanding would establish guiding principles and set out next steps.

During their visit to Cleveland, the Central Elgin officials also met with other local officials and community leaders, toured downtown Cleveland and heard a presentation from HMS Global Maritime, Inc., a ferry service management company based in New Albany, Indiana.

Gary Seabrook, HMS executive vice president, showcased the type of vessel that could most efficiently be used; mid-speed catamaran with a large passenger cabin, an open air deck and a vehicle deck for up to 50 cars and a limited number of trucks and buses. This type of vessel is in widespread use around the globe due to its very high level of capacity in relation to its size as well as fuel efficiency, ease of maintenance and acceptable crossing speed. The vessel can be designed to be very green by today's standards.

“This type of vessel provides a mini-cruise experience, with access to internet, movies and comfortable seating,” Seabrook said. “It hits the sweet spot between large conventional ferries and large high-speed crafts that have higher operating costs and require deeper harbors.”