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Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority

Abstract

The Authority is an international entity, created out of an agreement between the State of New York, with the consent of the United States Congress, and the Canadian Government. The Authority's mission is to be known as the premier Canada/US international border crossing. The Authority strives to provide excellent customer service and be an effective channel for trade and tourism between the two nations. The Authority governs the Peace Bridge. The Lewiston-Queenstown Bridge, the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge and the Rainbow Bridge are owned and operated by the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission. An existing law creates a six mile buffer zone surrounding the Peace Bridge, which prevents the construction a bridge with a similar purpose without the Authority's consent.

Keywords

Buffalo, Government, Local Government Bodies, Environment, Transit, Fact Sheet, PPG, PDF

Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority
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1. What is the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority?

The Authority is an international entity, created out of an agreement between the State of New York, with the consent of the United States Congress, and the Canadian Government.¹

2. What is this Authority's mission?

The Authority's mission is to be known as the premier Canada/US international border crossing.² The Authority strives to provide excellent customer service and be an effective channel for trade and tourism between the two nations.³

3. What does the Authority control?

The Authority governs the Peace Bridge.⁴ The Lewiston-Queenstown Bridge, the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge and the Rainbow Bridge are owned and operated by the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission.⁵ An existing law creates a six mile buffer zone surrounding the Peace Bridge, which prevents the construction a bridge with a similar purpose without the Authority's consent.⁶

4. Is the Authority referred to by any other names?

Yes. The Authority is often called the Peace Bridge Authority or the Public Bridge Authority for short.

5. Who runs the Authority?

The Authority is run by a 10 member Board of Directors. Five of these members are from the United States and the other five are from Canada.⁷ The chairmanship alternates each year between an American and Canadian board member.⁸

6. How are the Authority's board members appointed?

The five Canadian members are appointed by the Governor in Council, upon recommendation from the Minister of Transport.⁹ Two of the American members are appointed by the New York State Governor, upon confirmation from the New York State Legislature.¹⁰ The New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner, the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (NFTA) Chairman, and the New York State Attorney General or individuals designated by these authorities, occupy the three remaining American spots.¹¹

7. Who is on the current Board of Directors?

The current American board members are Chairman Kenneth A. Schoetz, Gerald J. Lewandowski, John B. Maggiore, and Gregory Stamm.¹² The Canadian board members are Vice Chair Anthony M Annunziata, Catherine S. Dennahower, Mary L. Fickel, Henry J. Froese, and Anna T. Tartaglia.¹³ There is one vacant American seat at this time.¹⁴



8. Are the positions on the Board of Director's permanent?

No. The Canadian members and the two American positions appointed by the New York Governor are termed positions.¹⁵ The other three American border positions are also not permanent.¹⁶

9. Where is the Authority's Office located?

The Authority's administrative office is located at 100 Queen St. Fort Erie, ON L2A 3S6.¹⁷

10. When did the Authority begin?

In 1922, New York created the Buffalo and Fort Erie Peace Bridge Company to assess the possibility of creating a bridge over the Niagara River.¹⁸ The Canadian Government created a similar company in 1923, under the same name.¹⁹ These companies merged on June 13, 1925 to form the current international company.²⁰ After raising funds and support for the construction, the Company managed the bridge upon its completion in 1927.²¹ The Authority became a public entity in 1933, following financial difficulties.²²

11. How does the Authority raise its revenue?

The Authority's main source of revenue comes from the Peace Bridge's toll fees.²³ The rental fees from the United States Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, Public Works and Government Services Canada, the United States and Canadian duty-free shops, and other commercial brokers operating on its property and the Peace Bridge are another source of revenue.²⁴

12. How much revenue does the Authority secure from these sources?

In 2007 the Authority raised \$21,717,000 from toll fees and \$8,324,000 from other sources, for a total revenue of \$30,041,000.²⁵ In 2006 the Authority raised \$18,973,000 from toll fees and \$8,251,000 from other sources for a total of \$27, 224,000.²⁶

13. For what does the authority use this revenue?

The Authority uses its revenue to pay expenses resulting from bridge maintenance and operation.²⁷ In 2007 the Authority's operating expenses totaled \$19,755,000, with \$4,999,000 being spent on bridge and facility maintenance.²⁸ The total operating expense increased slightly from the 2006 total of \$18,448,000.²⁹ The Authority also uses its revenue to pay the principal interest on its bonds and continues to fulfill its agreements with the bond holders, until the bonds are discharged.³⁰

14. What are these bonds?

The initial purpose of these bonds was to secure the necessary funds for the Peace Bridge Construction.³¹ The first bonds were issued on June 2, 1925, consisting of \$3,000,000 in mortgage certificates, with a 7% interest rate, and \$1,500,000 in debenture bands, with an 8% interest rate.³²

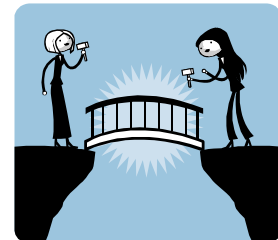
The Authority continues to issue bonds to secure funds for construction, and it plans to issue future bonds for its expansion projects.³³ In 2005 the Authority issued \$44,120,000 in 2005 Series Toll Bridge System Revenue Refunding Bonds, with an interest rate of 3% through June 30, 2007. After this date the interest rate on these bonds increased to 4% and will run through July 1, 2010.³⁴ Much of these assets were used to complete the construction on the new Canadian Plaza and pay the costs for studies conducted by the Authority concerning its plans for the future bridge and plaza expansions.³⁵

15. Are the Canadian Government and New York State responsible for any of the Authority's debts?

No. The Authority's obligations are not debts for the Canadian Government or New York State.³⁶

16. Is the Authority a permanent agency?

No. The Authority will control the Peace Bridge and other property until July 1, 2020 or until all of its bonds are paid.³⁷ At this time the Authority's power will fall under the jurisdictions of Canada and New York State.³⁸



17. Besides maintaining the Peace Bridge, does the Authority have any other powers?

Yes. The Authority has a limited power of eminent domain, which it can use to acquire property surrounding its site for preferred projects.³⁹

18. What does the future hold for the Authority?

Three issues currently face the Authority:

1. Peace Bridge Expansion. Plans to expand the Peace Bridge to alleviate bridge congestion were put on hold due to environmental concerns and lack of public involvement.⁴⁰ The authority encourages the public to visit <http://www.peacebridgex.com/welcome.aspx> to become informed on the expansion process.
2. Construction of a new United States Plaza to improve the processing of traffic crossing the bridge. These plans currently involve disputes between the Authority and local homeowners involving acquisition of land surrounding the current United States plaza.⁴¹
3. Proposed Merger of the Authority and the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission. Assemblyman Sam Hoyt has argued for a merger, stating that “It doesn’t make sense to have two separate authorities — one a commission and the other an authority — managing four international border crossings within 20 miles of each other. . . .It’s the epitome of duplication, overlap and wastefulness.”⁴²

19. Can I attend the Authority meetings?

Yes. The Bridge Authority’s Meetings are open to the public. However, the Board of Directors may choose to have an Executive Session during the open meeting, which is not open to the public.⁴³

20. How often are the Authority meetings?

The Board of Director’s meetings are held monthly.⁴⁴ Committee meetings however are more frequent.⁴⁵

21. Where are the meetings held?

The meetings are held in the Administration Building, which is located in the Canadian Peace Bridge Plaza.⁴⁶

22. Does the Authority publish any other resources or weekly/monthly updates?

Yes. www.peacebridge.com contains many Bridge Authority publications, such as Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority 2007 Annual Report, the Authority’s 2007 Financial Statement, and the New York State Office of the Comptroller’s Audit Report 2006.⁴⁷ Other information can be obtained by directly contacting the Authority.⁴⁸

23. Where can I find more information on the Authority?

For more information please visit www.peacebridge.com. To contact the Ontario office, call phone number 905-871-1608 or send a fax to 905-871-9940. Emails can be sent to comments@peacebridge.com. Questions and comments can also be directed to the American Office at 1 Peace Bridge Plaza, Buffalo NY 14213, 716-884-6744.⁴⁹ Also visit

<http://buffaloreport.com/allbridge.html> for a number of articles on the Peace Bridge, written by Bruce Jackson.

¹ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

² <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

³ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

⁴ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

⁵ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

⁶ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

⁷ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

⁸ http://www.peacebridge.com/board_members.php

⁹ http://www.peacebridge.com/board_members.php

¹⁰ http://www.peacebridge.com/board_members.php

¹¹ http://www.peacebridge.com/board_members.php

¹² http://www.peacebridge.com/board_members.php

¹³ http://www.peacebridge.com/board_members.php

¹⁴ http://www.niagara-gazette.com/local/local_story_212212213.html

¹⁵ Information Provided by Bridge Authority Board of Director's Member John Maggiore

¹⁶ Information Provided by Bridge Authority Board of Director's Member John Maggiore

¹⁷ <http://www.peacebridge.com/officelocation.php>

¹⁸ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>; see also A.W. Spear, The Peace Bridge 1927-1977 and Reflections of the Past, The Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority, Buffalo, NY.

¹⁹ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>; see also A.W. Spear, The Peace Bridge 1927-1977 and Reflections of the Past, The Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority, Buffalo, NY.

²⁰ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>; see also A.W. Spear, The Peace Bridge 1927-1977 and Reflections of the Past, The Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority, Buffalo, NY.

²¹ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>; see also A.W. Spear, The Peace Bridge 1927-1977 and Reflections of the Past, The Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority, Buffalo, NY.

²² <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

²³ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

²⁴ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

²⁵ Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority 2007 Annual Report

²⁶ Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority 2007 Annual Report

²⁷ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>

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- ²⁸ Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority 2007 Annual Report
- ²⁹ Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority 2007 Annual Report
- ³⁰ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>
- ³¹ A.W. Spear, The Peace Bridge 1927-1977 and Reflections of the Past, The Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority, Buffalo, NY.
- ³² A.W. Spear, The Peace Bridge 1927-1977 and Reflections of the Past, The Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority, Buffalo, NY.
- ³³ Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority 2007 Annual Report
- ³⁴ Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority 2007 Annual Report
- ³⁵ Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority 2007 Annual Report
- ³⁶ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>
- ³⁷ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>
- ³⁸ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>
- ³⁹ <http://www.peacebridge.com/aboutus.php>
- ⁴⁰ <http://osc.state.ny.us/audits/allaudits/093005/04s38.pdf>
- ⁴¹ <http://www.buffalonews.com/opinion/everybodyscolumn/story/409670.html>;
<http://www.buffalonews.com/opinion/everybodyscolumn/story/409670.html>;
<http://www.wkbw.com/news/local/15754732.html>
- ⁴² <http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/niagaracounty/story/403766.html>
http://www.buffalorising.com/story/hoyt_asks_to_merge_bridge_enti
- ⁴³ Information Provided by Bridge Authority Board of Director's Member John Maggiore
- ⁴⁴ Information Provided by Bridge Authority Board of Director's Member John Maggiore
- ⁴⁵ Information Provided by Bridge Authority Board of Director's Member John Maggiore
- ⁴⁶ Information Provided by Bridge Authority Board of Director's Member John Maggiore
- ⁴⁷ <http://www.peacebridge.com/publications.php>
- ⁴⁸ Information Provided by Bridge Authority Board of Director's Member John Maggiore
- ⁴⁹ <http://www.peacebridge.com/contact.php>