



Port of Montreal
Port de Montréal

MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE PORT OF MONTREAL

The Montreal Port Authority is a federal agency that reports to Transport Canada. It employs some 325 people, whose mission is to ensure reliable and competitive service to carriers from more than a hundred countries that call into the Port. The Port of Montreal is not only one of the main transatlantic transshipment hubs in North America, it is a recognized leader in the intermodal transport sector.

With more than three centuries of history, the Port of Montreal now holds a predominant place in the economy of Montreal, the province and the entire country. It generates annually more than 1.5 billion dollars in economic spinoffs and accounts for more than 18,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Some Port milestones

1535

Jacques Cartier explores the island of Montreal, home to the city and the Port of Montreal.

1603

Samuel de Champlain arrives on the island and finds no trace of the Huron village of Hochelaga that had welcomed Jacques Cartier.

1642

Paul Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve, establishes Ville-Marie.

For almost two centuries, the Port of Montreal mainly serves canoes, flatboats and barges used in the booming fur trade. French sailboats, and then English, supply the colony. Montreal really begins to gain prominence as a port city at the beginning of the 19th century with the arrival of the steamship.

1809

John Molson launches the first Canadian steamship, the Accommodation.

1826

Montreal merchants - the very people who had created the Board of Trade four years earlier - send a petition to the Department of Public Works Canada, seeking to deepen the St. Lawrence River channel because its shallowness was an impediment to the city's development.

1830

Creation of the first *Harbour Commission*. The commissioners build the first permanent wharves and press the government to dredge the river.

1830-1832

More than 1,143 metres (3,750 feet) of docks are built.

1853

John Young becomes Chairman of the *Harbour Commission* and provides fresh impetus to port improvement.

1854

Work to increase the depth of the navigation channel to 4.88 metres (16 feet) and width to 76.19 metres (250 feet) between Montreal and Quebec is completed.

1856

Montreal Ocean Steamship Company, which would later become part of Allan Line, inaugurates the first regular steamship service between Montreal and Liverpool, England.

1867

Following port improvements, 500 ships call to the port.

1871

The first locomotive arrives on the wharves.

1880

Electric lights brighten the port for the first time.

1883

Channel is dredged to 7.5 metres (25 feet).

1898

New stone walls are built along the length of the port and new piers are planned.

1902

Beginning of the construction of modern grain elevators at the port.

1908

Construction of the first permanent transit sheds.

1910

Project to deepen the channel to 10.57 metres (35 feet) is undertaken.

1936

Federal government forms National Harbours Board. Port of Montreal comes under its umbrella, ending the regime of the Harbour Commissioners of Montreal.

1947

More than 25 steamship lines serve the Port of Montreal 7½ months of the year.

1962

The federal government decides to use icebreakers to keep the channel open all winter long between Quebec and Montreal. This initiative is taken mainly to prevent ice jams that would cause major flooding in the Greater Montreal region and Lake St. Pierre every year.

1964

The Helga Dan becomes the first ship to reach the Port of Montreal at the outset of the year in January. Year-round navigation is born in Montreal.

1967

Port of Montreal handles its first container.

1968

Canada's first container terminal opens in Montreal. Manchester Liners Ltd. launches a weekly container service to the United Kingdom.

1972

Construction of Cast Container Terminal.

1977

Port of Montreal handles its one-millionth container.

1978

Port of Montreal expands and handles more and more containers in the east end of Montreal.

Construction of Racine Container Terminal.

Port administration hands over its oldest facilities backing on to Old Montreal to the Old Port.

1983

Creation of the Montreal Port Corporation, a highly-autonomous port corporation reporting to the federal Transport Minister. Its board of directors is made up of businesspeople from the Montreal region.

1987

Opening of Maisonneuve Container Terminal (Termont).

Port of Montreal handles more than five million tonnes of container cargo for the first time.

1992

Minimal depth of navigable waters increases to 11 metres (36 feet) following maintenance dredging project using more precise methods to locate high spots on the bed of the channel.

1996

Two brand new container ships each with a capacity of at least 2,300 TEUs (20-foot equivalent units) are christened in Montreal.

1998

Two shipping lines take delivery of three ships capable of transporting 2,800 TEUs (20-foot equivalent units). These ultramodern vessels are the biggest container ships sailing the St. Lawrence. Specially built for the river, they are safer than ever thanks to electronic navigation.

1999

Under the new Canada Marine Act, the Montreal Port Corporation becomes the Montreal Port Authority and even more autonomous. Federal, provincial and municipal governments each name an individual to the board of directors. The federal transport minister, on the recommendation of Port users, nominates four other directors. All seven directors are businesspeople from the Montreal region.

Project for the selective dredging of shoals over two per cent of the surface area of the channel bed between Montreal and Cap à la Roche, downstream from Trois-Rivières, increases the minimal depth of navigable waters to 11.3 metres (37 feet).

Port of Montreal handles a record amount of containerized cargo for a seventh consecutive year – some nine million tonnes in close to one million 20-foot containers or the equivalent. A leader in the North Atlantic container market, the Port continues to handle an impressive and diverse amount of general and bulk cargo. Total traffic reaches some 20 million tonnes annually.

2001-2007

The Port of Montreal enjoys an average total annual growth of 5.1%, due in large part to a 43% increase in container traffic.

2007

MPA activities generate an added value of \$1.5 billion, one billion of which is directly attributable to containers.

December 2007 - After several months of tests, electronic navigation is now used by pilots on the St. Lawrence.

2008

Amendments to the Canada Marine Act allow port authorities to request sums by means of credits allocated by Parliament for projects involving infrastructure, the environment and security, and grant port authorities with revenues in excess of \$25 M recourse to commercial loans.

Despite the global financial crisis that exploded in October 2008, the Port of Montreal posts a higher average growth in container traffic for the year than the 10 largest North American container ports.

2009

In the wake of the global economic crisis, the Port of Montreal is experiencing a 14.1% decline. However, this result is similar to, or better than, its main competitors on the North American East Coast. The Port recorded very positive results in the marine grain traffic sector with a 30.4% upswing for the first ten months of 2009.

Data now available on the origin or destination of containers transiting through Montreal (no longer on the vessels alone) show that container traffic at the Port of Montreal is much more evenly spread around the world, including Asia.