



News Release

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ISLANDS TRUST COUNCIL ASKS PROVINCE TO INVEST IN FERRIES

VICTORIA – Islands Trust Council is calling on the provincial government to keep the promise to treat ferries as an essential part of BC’s transportation infrastructure. Islands Trust Council, a local government responsible for the Southern Gulf and Howe Sound islands, is making four specific requests in a [December 20 submission](#) to the provincial government in response to the BC Coastal Ferries consultation process.

“Ferries are lifelines for coastal communities and businesses; just like highways are in the rest of the province,” said Sheila Malcolmson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. “The current approach to the marine transportation system is failing us and the future is predictable. As fares go up, ridership goes down, and as ridership goes down, fares go up yet again. As services get cut, coastal economies weaken further. This cycle of decline has to stop and the root of the problem lies with chronic provincial government underinvestment.”

“The cost of using BC Ferries is a crucial issue for our constituents – every community we represent is dependent on the ferry system, and the substantial cumulative fare increases over the last decade (up an average of 80% and up 133% on some routes) are hurting families, businesses and community well-being,” said Malcolmson. “Ferry fares cover 85% of operating costs, which is more user-pay than any other form of BC transportation, but we just can’t pay more.”

Malcolmson added that businesses and families invested on the islands based on repeated and consistent promises from the provincial government that it would sustain affordable, reliable ferry services. “In this context, we were astonished to read a December 17th provincial announcement of billions of dollars of investment in highways and public transit that makes absolutely no reference to ferries. Infrastructure funds flow freely to other regions of the province, yet the province is relying on ever-increasing ferry fares to pay for the ferry system infrastructure deficit. It is hard to imagine the provincial government proposing to curtail access to northern or interior communities while also suggesting new local taxes to pay for overdue repairs to provincial highways, yet that’s what’s happening on the coast.”

“The provincial government needs to return to the fundamental principle that built this coastal province: marine transportation is an essential part of BC’s prosperity. The provincial government must take full responsibility for capital costs and immediately provide sufficient funding to significantly reduce fares on the minor routes. By reinvesting in the minor routes to reduce fares and jumpstart ridership, the provincial government can help restore the economic and social health of ferry-dependent communities and the province,” Malcolmson said.

“Islanders want to help with service efficiencies and have proposed great ideas over the years, but a consultation process that asks whether ferries should convert to natural gas is disingenuous – that’s like asking the public what kind of fuel airlines should use. We are calling for more detailed and specific consultations with Island communities before any significant service changes or cuts are considered, and we think this will work best if ferry fares are first stabilized.”

The Islands Trust Council is a federation of local government bodies representing 25,000 people living within the Islands Trust Area. The Islands Trust is *responsible for preserving and protecting the unique environment and amenities of the Islands Trust Area through planning and regulating land use, development management, education, cooperation with other agencies, and land conservation.* The area covers the islands and waters between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

- 30 -

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Preserving **Island** communities, culture and environment

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