

# Trustee Notebook

By Laura Busheikin



## FERRY NEWS

As a Local Trustee, one of my jobs is to serve on the Denman-Hornby Ferry Advisory Commission, which brings together BC Ferries management and representatives of both Islands. Given how very, very important ferries are to our lives and communities, I am devoting this Trustee Notebook to reporting on two key topics from our April meeting:

### Cable Ferry Update:

The cable ferry is set to launch in fall 2014, probably October. Work will begin in December of this year, and by August or September of 2014 we'll see the ferry doing trial runs. BC Ferries management does not anticipate any shut down of ferry service during construction.

The new terminal is intended to hold a ferry-load of vehicles, reducing the number of cars snaking up the hill. We heard that the plan includes six or seven lanes, space for the school bus, pick-up and drop-off, vendors, and slightly increased parking capacity. FAC members had a few questions and suggestions:

**Parking:** Because people seem to be carpooling more (the Internet makes this easier), and also because so many of us are committed to lowering our carbon footprint, I suggested prioritizing parking, even though this will mean less space for vehicles waiting for the ferry. BCF representatives said they'd come back with two different options.

There are no plans to have paid parking at the terminal, nor is there likely to be, said BCF reps. There is no apparent need for it, and also it would be hard to find a company able to manage it.

This leaves open the question of how to manage parking at the ferry terminal. Is it okay for cars to stay there for days, or even weeks or months? If not, how can that be monitored and enforced?

BCF told us they would take their cues from the community. If parking issues become problematic, the community can ask for a change or suggest a public forum on parking. Each community deals with parking in its own way, from 'anything goes' to a strictly-enforced (ie with immediate towing) 24-hour maximum. My reading of the general sense on Denman, and at the FAC meeting, is that there is no need or appetite for new policies or enforcement.

**Boat launch:** FAC members requested that the boat launch be preserved or moved to a new location if necessary. BCF reps agreed to consider this, and report back on this. BCF will be presenting draft plans to the community in June and seeking the Committee's feedback. There is a

finite amount of space available and there may need to be a trade-off between areas made available for holding ferry traffic, parking and vending, depending on the community's priorities.

**Staffing:** BCF is going to create a transition plan for staff, and are well-aware of the community's desire to keep locals employed on our ferry. The cable ferry jobs will operate on a slightly separate track from other BCF jobs, in that licensed staff on the cable ferry will not qualify for "sea time." This means these will not be attractive jobs for staff wanting to eventually move to other ferry jobs in other communities, which -- at least this is my understanding of it -- will keep these positions available for locals, who live here and want to stay here.

### 2) Experience Cards trends:

FAC members brought up concerns about where the Experience Card is heading. Usage of the card has been going up over the past few years, particularly on the Denman and Hornby routes, which have among highest utilization rates in the whole system (and the highest discount). With more and more travellers using discount fares (currently up to 80%), both regular and discount fares will need to be hiked to generate the revenue required to fill the gap between the cost of service and government contributions.

Our discussion circled around one main question: is the Experience Card meant to provide a residents' discount, a frequent-user discount, or a way for anyone who pays the minimum loading to get a discount on most or all ferry routes? A residents' card would mean that visitors to the Island, be they family, friends or vacationers, wouldn't have access to the discount. Also it would mean the card can't be used on all participating routes. Most communities BCF has heard from said they don't want the card limited to residents only (interestingly, our FAC tended towards the opposite view).

One option is to get rid of the discount and have one "blended" rate somewhere between the current regular and discount rate. Another option is to operate the Experience Card as a frequent-user card -- just like my Woofy's or Kaffee Klatsch card. This might for instance offer every 10th trip free or provide increasing discounts with increasing use.

BCF didn't offer any conclusions on this topic but they said they are looking for answers, and are discussing this with every community they visit.

I'd be happy to hear your opinions and ideas about these and other ferry topics, and will do my best to represent them in my role as FAC member. **Contact me** at 250-218-3216 or [lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca), or drop by during office hours as listed on the back page of this publication.