



September 25, 2015

Honourable Todd Stone
Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure
Parliament Buildings
PO Box 9055 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8V 9E2

Mr. Michael Corrigan
President and CEO
British Columbia Ferry Services Inc.
Suite 500 – 1321 Blanshard Street
Victoria BC V8W 0B7

Dear Minister Stone and Mr. Corrigan:

**BC Ferries Commissioner Service Plan and Budget
For the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2017**

I am pleased to submit to you the attached document as required by section 59 of the *Coastal Ferry Act*.

The document outlines how the Commission intends to fulfill its mandate in the coming fiscal year, and the associated expenditures.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Stoilen".

Sheldon Stoilen
BC Ferries Deputy Commissioner

Attachment



British Columbia Ferries Commissioner

Service Plan and Budget for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2017

*Prepared and submitted in accordance with
Section 59 of the Coastal Ferry Act
of the Province of British Columbia*

September 25, 2015

British Columbia Ferries Commissioner
PO Box 9279
Victoria, BC V9W 9J7
Telephone (250) 952-0112

<http://www.bcferrycommission.ca>
info@bcferrycommission.ca

Service Plan and Budget

for the Fiscal Year Ending

March 31, 2017

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1. Executive Summary

The position of **British Columbia Ferries Commissioner** was created in April 2003 by the **Coastal Ferry Act** (the “Act”). The current commissioner was appointed in May 2011 with his term due to expire on April 30, 2017. The current deputy commissioner was reappointed in June 2014 and his term is due to expire on June 30, 2020. Their office is known as the BC Ferries Commissioner (the “Commission”).

*Service Plan and Budget for
FY 2017*

This Service Plan and Budget for the next fiscal year ending on March 31, 2017 (“FY 2017”) describes the anticipated activities of the Commission in order to meet its mandate of regulating ferry operators, making certain special decisions, conducting performance reviews and carrying out public outreach and administrative responsibilities.

Total expenditures for FY 2017 are budgeted at \$837,250 which is **80%** of the maximum permitted for the Commission’s budget under s.59(2) of *Coastal Ferry Act*¹.

The budget for FY 2017 is slightly lower than the budget for FY 2016 as FY 2017 reflects no activity associated with the price cap review for the fourth performance term (“PT4”) commencing on April 1, 2016. The price cap review for PT4 was completed in FY 2016.

Activity is budgeted for three performance reviews and four applications for approval of a major capital expenditure including the replacement of up to five vessels for the minor routes, the Langdale Terminal development plan and the Fleet Maintenance Unit development plan.

¹ Section 59(2) limits the budget to one-fifth of one percent of the previous year’s tariff revenue. Tariff revenue for FY 2015 was \$520 million setting a maximum budget of \$1,040,000.

2. Role of the Commission

**Regulatory Principles
for the BC Ferries Commissioner**
under s. 38 of the *Coastal Ferry Act*

- (a) the primary role of the commissioner is to balance, in the manner the commissioner considers appropriate, the interests of ferry users, taxpayers and the financial sustainability of ferry operators;
- (b) ferry operators are to be encouraged to adopt a commercial approach to ferry service delivery;
- (c) ferry operators are to be encouraged to seek additional or alternative service providers on designated ferry routes through fair and open competitive processes;
- (d) ferry operators are to be encouraged to be innovative and to minimize expenses without adversely affecting their safe compliance with core ferry services.

The **BC Ferries Commissioner** is a quasi-judicial regulatory agency operating under the *Coastal Ferry Act* of the Province of British Columbia. While discharging its responsibilities, the Commission is required to bear in mind a set of four principles (see box to the left).

British Columbia Ferry Services Inc. (“BC Ferries”) was created in April 2003 as an independent company from the former BC Ferry Corporation, which was a Crown corporation. The sole shareholder of BC Ferries is the BC Ferry Authority.

Under a long-term contract (the “Coastal Ferry Services Contract” or “CFSC”) with the Province of British Columbia, BC Ferries must provide ferry services with defined minimum “core” service levels on each of the 24 regulated saltwater routes. Under the current CFSC, BC Ferries receives a “ferry transportation fee” per round-trip sailing on 20 designated routes. The four remaining routes, referred to as major routes, are regarded as financially self-sufficient and ferry transportation fees do not apply.

BC Ferries currently holds a virtual monopoly position in most of the transportation markets it serves. Given the lack of effective competition, a major role of the Commission is to set a ceiling or “price cap” on the weighted average level of fares which BC Ferries can charge. The goal in setting the price cap is to balance the interests of ferry users with the interests of taxpayers while protecting the financial sustainability of the ferry operator. Price cap increases are determined every four years for the next four year performance term.

Other key tasks of the commissioner include monitoring BC Ferries’ adherence to the terms of the CFSC, approving major capital expenditures, regulating unfair competitive advantage, conducting performance reviews and monitoring of BC Ferries’ customer complaints process. It is worth noting that the commissioner serves as neither an ombudsman nor a complaints bureau. Further, the commissioner is not responsible for regulating safety or environmental aspects of ferry operations.

3. Service Plan and Budget

Table 1: Expenditure Budget for Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2017	
Regulatory Monitoring & Decisions	\$304,500
Inspections and Performance Reviews	187,000
Publication and Outreach	182,000
Administration, Legal and Reporting	163,750
Contingency	Nil
Total Expenditures	\$837,250

Regulatory Monitoring and Decisions reflects the ongoing quarterly monitoring and enforcement of price cap compliance as well as Special Decisions involving approval of major capital expenditures during the fourth performance term. Anticipated activity includes four applications for major capital expenditure approvals including the replacement of up to five vessels for the minor routes, the Langdale Terminal development plan and the Fleet Maintenance Unit development plan.

For FY 2017 the budget excludes any activity associated with the price cap review process leading to the determination of the price caps for the fifth performance term which runs from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2024. That process does not commence until FY 2018.

Inspections and Performance Reviews reflects provisions for performance reviews. Three such reviews are anticipated in FY 2017.

Publication and Outreach reflects the activity associated with correspondence with the public, maintenance of the Commission's website as the main vehicle of publication and the responsibility of considering the interests of ferry users and conducting public consultation.

Administration, Legal and Reporting includes a provision for office and support services provided by the Ministry of Justice, records management services and the preparation of the Commission's Annual Report and the Annual Service Plan & Budget. This category also includes an amount for general legal services and opinions provided to the commissioner as required in carrying out his responsibilities under the *Coastal Ferry Act*.