

joining hands across the waters ...

Gulf Islands Alliance

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June 16, 2011

Mr. Gordon Macatee
BC Ferry Commissioner
BC Ferry Commission
RPO Hillside PO Box 35119
Victoria, B.C. V8T 5G2

By email

Re: Review of Coastal Ferry Act

Dear Mr. Macatee:

The Gulf Islands Alliance (GIA) is a non-profit, non-government, grassroots organization with members based on islands under the jurisdiction of the Islands Trust. We work cooperatively and collaboratively with a network of individuals and organizations throughout the Trust area to uphold the Trust Object. One of our objectives is to encourage environmentally sustainable, locally driven economies.

On behalf of GIA I express our concerns as to the impact increased ferry fares and proposed changes to route services have on the affordability and sustainability of coastal ferry services.

It is essential that the socio-diversity of island communities be maintained. Both proposed and recently accrued ferry fare increases are serious concerns for families, low income earners and pensioners who have invested in island life, often to the benefit of their community and British Columbia. Our island communities depend on the many services that resident volunteers maintain, such as support for seniors, parkland and trail maintenance, ambulance and fire department, and many other emergency and community services.

Proposed reductions in essential ferry route services will also disadvantage island businesses. Many island businesses depend heavily on visitors and these opportunities are disadvantaged by both ferry fare increases and reduced ferry route services.

GIA strongly supports the review of the Coastal Ferry Act. We urge that this review recognize the principle that our coastal ferry service is an integral part of the provincial highway system. We further urge the Commissioner to recommend that the Province provide an annual service fee that both recognizes this principle and reflects the reality of rising fuel and other costs faced by our ferry services over time. We urge our elected government to ensure that these essential ferry services are maintained and enhanced for the public good.

Sincerely,



Misty MacDuffee,
Chair, Gulf Islands Alliance

cc: Blair Lekstrom, Minister, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure