

# Gabriola Island Ferry Advisory Committee

## March 11, 2023 Meeting Agenda

10:00 am – 12:00 pm, Gabriola Arts & Heritage Centre

### Meeting Purpose

**1. Share information by providing the Ferry Advisory Committee with:**

- Updates on corporate and route-specific activities, plans and projects
- Answers and updates on route-specific questions and concerns

**2. Hear feedback and initiate action by:**

- Hearing from the Ferry Advisory Committee about potential solutions to areas of concern
- Generating trackable action items and next steps to address areas of concern raised by the Ferry Advisory Committee

**3. Increase transparency and accountability by providing a public venue where:**

- Community members can observe and hear the information and feedback exchanged between BC Ferries and the Ferry Advisory Committee
- Actions and solutions to concerns can be identified, recorded, tracked and reported

Topic	Time
<b>Territorial acknowledgement, introduction and welcome</b>	10 mins
<b>Discussion section</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Crewing updates and sailing cancellations</li> <li>2. Making it Right – Compensation for travelers</li> <li>3. Notices to the public</li> <li>4. Terminal development updates</li> <li>5. Route 19 Electrification of Ferries and Terminals</li> <li>6. Meanings for Kwigwis and Gwawis</li> </ol>	1 hours
<b>Information section</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BC Ferries Operational updates Marine superintendent Terminals</li> <li>2. Customer experience updates</li> <li>3. Community Relations</li> </ol>	30 mins
<b>Follow Up Items</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tide-related loading restrictions</li> <li>2. Motorcycles at Descanso Bay terminal</li> <li>3. Webcam</li> </ol>	15 mins
<b>Final Questions &amp; Close</b>	5 minutes

## Gabriola Island Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting Topic Log March 11, 2023

NOTE: notes summarizing the general discussion of meeting participants is included in the appropriate section of each agenda item in the table below.

Text in black was information sent to all meeting invitees prior to the meeting as part of the agenda. Text in blue are notes taken during the meeting as each item was discussed. Text in red captures a follow up action and parties responsible.

### Meeting attendees:

BC Ferries: Tamara Olson, Carrie McIntosh, Capt. James Bradley, Graeme Fipke, Rebecca Jamieson, Tudor Popa

Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure: N/A

FAC: Henry Reeve, Susan Yates, Vanessa Craig, Ivan Bulic, Steve Earle, Heather O’Sullivan, Carly McMahon, Tyler Gray,

Public: Dawn and Carolyn Elkington (terminal neighbours)

New Discussion Items	
<p><b>Crewing Updates &amp; Sailing Cancellations</b></p>	<p>Crewing continues to be a top priority for BC Ferries. We are undertaking the largest recruitment push in BCF’s history as we continue to be challenged by retirements in key on-board positions, the general worldwide shortage of mariners, fewer young people entering the marine sector and an extremely competitive job market in BC.</p> <p><b>New recruitment strategy</b></p> <p>New this year, we are recruiting primarily for casual positions. We are offering guaranteed hours, flexible schedules to support work-life balance, options to stay after peak season, extensive training and great career opportunities.</p>

### Application process

We are looking at ways to make it easy for people to apply including an updated careers page on bcferrys.com and local job fairs with on the spot interviews.

Our data shows 98 of 4,206 planned sailings were cancelled over this time (2.33% of total sailings). Of the 98 cancelled sailings:

- 43 sailings (44%) were cancelled due to crewing challenges
- 38 sailings (39%) were cancelled due to weather
- 17 sailings (17%) were cancelled due to other factors like mechanical issues

Having vessels sail requires the correct number of licensed crew, which is a challenge at the moment. The first option is to cancel the sailings on one of the two ships. This results in a higher number of cancellations than with the Quinsam (1 ship service).

There have been instances when both ships are tied up due to lack of licensed crew. We do contact everyone who is cleared to work on the ships within the company when these situations arise. Crews need to be trained on each individual vessel in order to be cleared to work on them, which limits how big the pool of available resources is. Having new Island Class vessels sailing on the Quadra/Campbell River route increases the pool of resources available to us now.

Gabriola is similar to other islands in our systems where it is particularly difficult to draw licensed crew and the company is looking at how we can better support crew on these Islands. For example, supporting with water taxi service, housing rentals etc.

Commuter hours can still be a challenge, and because of how fast Gabriola is growing, the capacity of the current vessels and the pinch points still being felt is a concern for the future. It seems like the crewing issue could have been foreseen and planned for. The company did try to plan for these issues, COVID and a high number of retirees have created additional challenges.

We have launched the biggest crewing campaign in our company's history and we are fundamentally changing the way we support and recruit our staff including hours, wages, promoting from within, training and cross-training etc. The company is doing a full wage to look at the possibility of compensation matching with market standards.

	<p>Weather cancellations have also been a concern lately. Heavy snowfall does impact the ability of crew to get to work and that has been an impact with the heavy snowfall seen lately. The visiting vessel pier in Nanaimo where the Gwawis ties up is challenging for getting in and out of dock. High winds make docking particularly risky and we have put wind parameters in place to mitigate risk of damage to the vessel and the pier. The visiting vessel pier will be operational for us until the terminal upgrades are complete at Nanaimo Harbour.</p> <p>The cancellations related to power outages and weather that happened sounded like they were related to not being able to contact crew because of cell service outage. Is there an ability to put people on the ground to contact crew in those sorts of unusual events? In these events it would be the responsibility of the captain who may not have the contact information of crew and would require additional resources. There is an opportunity to look at these processes for future.</p> <p>The goal is zero cancelled sailings as it is impactful for the company and the community.</p>
<p><b>Making it Right – Compensation for travelers</b></p>	<p>We recognize the impact that cancellations have on passengers and are taking steps to try and mitigate the impacts felt. The making it right program was developed to help recognize those impacts and compensate travelers for the additional cost.</p> <p>During the winter months our teams received a high number of requests through the program and we recognize the wait time for those looking to receive compensation is above our normal response time (typically between 7–14 days). To improve on this, we are hiring additional staff and working on process improvements. This hiring is part of the large recruitment campaign just launched.</p> <p>Our Customer Care team is working on the development of a card that can be handed out at the terminal when there is a cancellation within our control. This card would include information on the making it right program and how to find out more information.</p> <p>Service interruption on Dec 2 was the major disruption due to power and cell outages, major weather event. At this time the drop-off was at Green Wharf, and the community bus was not running, so alternate service (water taxi) was compromised.</p> <p>BCF has requested proof of surgery to provide compensation for accommodation during this unusual outage and the inability to make use of alternate service because travellers were not mobile as a result of surgery. There has been a lengthy wait time (55 days) to get a response on the compensation</p>

	<p>request that is unacceptable. In addition, the water taxi alternate service creates challenges for people and having to provide proof and wait for a lengthy period of time to get compensation seems unfair when cancellations are BCF caused (i.e inability to crew vessel).</p> <p>We understand the impact to customers and hear the frustrations and upset. The customer care teams are caught up on the requests coming in for the Making it Right program and have staffed up to mitigate the length of wait times moving forward. Proof of a customer’s situation or need is necessary to help avoid fraudulent claims, though we understand this feels unfair and overly strict to those with legitimate claims.</p> <p>The compensation processes seem overly onerous. The terminals don’t seem empowered to compensate people in the moment, for example: people needing to return immediately when they learn of cancellations. We apologize for these sorts of situations. There are a large number of new staff and many different situations flying at them on any given day. If there is a situation where terminal attendants are not able to answer the situation customers can always request that the attendant call the Departure Bay Terminal Manager as that is the next level of escalation.</p> <p>We will also take this feedback away and use it to help us train our staff. These are good examples of situations we can use for case studies when training our staff. Staff are also getting used to two-ship service and the new challenges it presents. We thank everyone for their patience and are working to make improvements as we learn.</p> <p>Clearer communications are required that compensation is not offered if alternate service is available and people are physically able to take advantage of it.</p> <p><b>Action: BCF will look at the wording on the ‘Making it Right’ page to ensure it is clear when and how compensation is offered.</b></p>
<p><b>Notices to the public</b></p>	<p>The BC Ferries mobile app, which launches this spring, will provide the ability to have push notifications like Service Notices delivered directly to a traveller’s mobile device.</p> <p>SMS messaging is already part of our long-term digital strategy and is a medium-term objective within BC Ferries’ digital strategy.</p> <p>Current Conditions pages are being reviewed as part of a project that looks to improve the information provided</p>

	<p>We have a team working on a current conditions project. The focus is on improving the accuracy, timeliness and consistency of information delivered to our customers. This includes messaging at our terminals, information to our staff assisting customers and website. There has been good progress made on the project and will have an update prior to peak season on the status</p> <p>The FACs would like to see an SMS text message system. While the app offers ‘push notifications’ requires internet connectivity which creates issues for remote island locations and for those without internet connectivity, e.g. students.</p> <p>SMS is part of the long-term plan. The medium term plan within the strategy is for the app notifications.</p> <p>Delay in Service Notices is being noticed. The mobile app should help to address these delays because the notifications do not have to go through the email system which can delay delivery.</p> <p>Action: BCF will provide additional detail on timeframe for SMS launch and the back-end requirements for SMS.</p>
<p><b>Nanaimo Harbour and Gabriola Terminal Re-development</b></p>	<p><b>Nanaimo Harbour terminal</b>  Safety improvements, including replacing the marine structure and timber trestle are expected to be completed in 2023.</p> <p>Our teams continue to work with local First Nations and stakeholders on the terminal development plans and required approvals. Work is expected to be complete in 2028.</p> <p>Highlights of the terminal development plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New berth</li> <li>• New ticket booth</li> <li>• Expanding the existing waiting room</li> <li>• Increased vehicle holding capacity</li> <li>• Long-term and short-term parking</li> <li>• New pick-up and drop-off areas</li> </ul> <p><b>Descanso Bay terminal</b>  Our teams continue to work with local First Nations and stakeholders on the terminal development</p>

plans and required approvals. Work is expected to be complete in 2028.

Highlights of the terminal development plan include:

- New berth
- New waiting room building
- Additional vehicle holding capacity
- Reduced traffic overflow on the road

With delays to the project, the FAC would like to see phasing to prioritize improvements, e.g. second berth at Nanaimo Harbour.

Members also noted safety of pedestrians, cyclists, motorists etc. on Gabriola roadways. Would like to consider lighting, shoulder width, crosswalks, signage at terminals and on vessels to warn of congestion and direct to safe routes – these are outlined in the TDP. Right now, pedestrians are required to walk up ferry hill with their backs to traffic which violates the highway act.

Ramps and tidal restrictions are also of major concern for travellers and these should be prioritized as well. Is it possible to create signage/notices around tidal restrictions so customers are aware. It's on the website, but BCF can create signage and a flyer to help make customers more aware. The flyer could also include information about traffic safety and movement on the Descanso Bay side.

Could larger or more detailed signage be explored on Taylor Bay Road to reduce the number and frequency of signage along the road. Perhaps overload sign be removed or moved?

The upgrades are in the early planning phases now. A project manager has been assigned to these projects and we have been working directly with First Nations as part of our permitting processes. BCF will seek community and FAC input on the plans as soon as possible.

**Action: BCF will set a specific meeting with the FAC about the terminal development plans and phasing at the earliest opportunity. MOTI, Islands Trust, RDN, will also be invited to these discussions. Mr and Mrs. Elkington would also like to be involved in the Descanso Bay planning as the nearest neighbours.**

**Action: BCF will check in with Terminal Construction and Terminal Maintenance to see if there are**

	<p>immediate improvements in the plans and will provide information back to the FAC.</p> <p>Action: BCF will create flyer and Descanso Bay signage to inform customers of the tidal restrictions that are in place today and explore the inclusion of traffic safety messaging.</p> <p>Action: BCF will move the overload sign to be more accurate. We won't remove it completely as we have heard feedback that it's valuable to some.</p>
<p><b>Route 19 Electrification of Ferries and Terminals</b></p>	<p>As set out in Performance Term 6, we plan to enable full electrical operations on Route 19.</p> <p>Early design work and hydro upgrades for terminal electrification are now getting underway for Nanaimo Harbour with Gabriola Island terminals.</p> <p>The initial design work is expected to take a year to complete and will include further engagement with First Nations and stakeholders.</p> <p>BCF will create a project page when there is more information available on terminal and ferry upgrades and what the community can expect. FAC would like to see plans in place for alternate service that might be required during upgrades e.g. use of Green Wharf and how to make it easier for people to use. RDN will need to be involved in planning for use of Green Wharf as owners. Also Cape Mudge residents will be impacted if Green Wharf is in use more frequently so planning is key.</p>
<p><b>Meanings for Kwigwis and Gwawis</b></p>	<p>The name Kwigwis, which means "eagle of the sea," and was selected with support from the 'Namgis First Nation.</p> <p>Gwawis means "raven of the sea" and was selected with input and support from the 'Namgis First Nation.</p> <p>This information is also available on <a href="https://bcferries.com/on-the-ferry/our-fleet/">bcferries.com/on-the-ferry/our-fleet/</a></p> <p>FAC has suggested explanations of the names and their importance to the 'Namgis Nation, and these could perhaps be included on the digital screens on the vessel and a plaque on the wall.</p> <p>Action: BCF will look at how we can incorporate this information on the vessel.</p>



<p><b>Shifting Gwawis schedule by one sailing later</b></p>	<p>In the summer the demand tends to the afternoon sailings, and this can create overloads when the schedule goes to one-ship service around 5pm.</p> <p>BCF would need to ensure we support the school runs. FAC has suggested we look at NDSS schedule to structure dates around that. The different schedule could be in place seven days a week.</p> <p>FAC noted the difficulty for people waiting on the road to access facilities. Terminal ops will have conversations with crew to ensure that the holding lot is being filled and that cars aren't being held on the roadway unnecessarily in the summer season when all holding lot space is needed.</p> <p><b>Action: BCF will take this request away and provide an answer.</b></p>
<p><b>Operational Updates</b></p>	
<p><b>Marine Superintendent</b></p>	<p>With the two Island Class vessels on the route, the on-time performance is around 96%, one of the highest in the fleet.</p> <p>The quick exchange of the Kwigwis and Gwawis will happen every few months to give time for maintenance. No replacements or refits are planned for the vessels in the near term.</p> <p>There were some slight schedule tweaks to help manage crew working hours, which seem to be working okay.</p>
<p><b>Terminals</b></p>	<p>No terminal operations updates, but welcome questions from the Committee.</p>
<p><b>Customer Experience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mobile app launch has launched (soft launch) and is available for download on BC Ferries website.</li> <li>• We have updated the website with tidal information on the schedule page as requested.</li> <li>• The team is involved in minor route current conditions improvements project and will provide an update on related activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Relations</b></p>	<p>We are pleased to welcome our new Community Relations Coordinator Arielle Houghton.</p>
<p><b>Follow Up Items</b></p>	
<p><b>Tide-related loading restrictions</b></p>	<p>What are the procedures how vehicles which appear to be non compliant with tidal restrictions are handled at the booth or when loading.</p>

	<p><b>UPDATE:</b> Updates have been made to the website to include information on tidal restrictions <a href="https://www.bcferrries.com/routes-fares/schedules/seasonal/NAH-GAB">https://www.bcferrries.com/routes-fares/schedules/seasonal/NAH-GAB</a></p> <p><b>Nanaimo Harbour Tidal Restrictions</b> The following tidal restrictions are in effect to prevent vehicles from scraping or getting caught on the loading ramps.</p> <p><b>Private vehicles</b> Avoid travel on sailings where the tide* is below 1.5m (5ft) or above 3.7m (12ft) Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RVs- significant overhang or low hitches</li> <li>• Receiver Mount Bicycle Racks</li> <li>• Low/Long Utility Trailers</li> <li>• Low/Long Horse Trailers</li> <li>• Large Under Mount Hitches</li> </ul> <p><b>Commercial vehicles</b> Long loads: avoid travel on sailings where the tide* is below 1.5 m (5ft) or above 3.7 m (12ft) Low-bed or low-overhang: avoid travel on sailings if the tide* is below 2.1 m (7ft) or above 3.4 m (11ft) *For tide information see: <a href="https://www.waterlevels.gc.ca/en/stations/7917">https://www.waterlevels.gc.ca/en/stations/7917</a></p>
<p><b>Motorcycles at Descanso Bay terminal</b></p>	<p>Steve Earle is providing a suggestion to paint a new motorcycle staging area behind the medical assured area. John replied that he is working a solution very similar to this with the Operations team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ACTION: John will report back to FAC through CR.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Webcam</b></p>	<p>FAC asked if BCF can consider installing a webcam at Nanaimo Harbour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ACTION: John will look into the feasibility of installing a webcam.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>UPDATE:</b> A project is in place to review current cameras, and what is required at minor terminals for Operations, Security and Safety. As a note, all cameras need to be located on BCF property due to security and privacy concerns. Additional considerations are also needed including equipment has access to power, maintenance and the required IT.</p>

<b>Final Questions and Close</b>	
<b>Can FAC members get a tour of Island Class vessels?</b>	Yes. This is possible. We can coordinate between the Marine Superintendent and the FAC Chair for this to happen.
<b>Snow removal at Descanso Bay</b>	The RDN has a good contact for snow removal. Vanessa Craig will send the contact to the FAC Chair for passing along to BCF.
<b>Inquiry from terminal neighbours about lights on the vessel.</b>	<p>Thank you from the neighbours for the changes to the timing of announcements and horn blasts which have made a difference.</p> <p>The vessel lights are bright and can be disruptive in the early morning hours – could some changes be made to this?</p>