

We need a ferry passenger bill of rights

Ferry passengers need a bill of rights, similar to those given to air passengers in Canada in 2019. BC already has a Taxi Passengers Bill of Rights. (Effective in 2013)

Editorial

No one disputes that BC Ferries is in a staffing crisis. But the fact that they've had over 125 sailings cancelled in the past month due to staffing challenges is cause to look at the service cancellations.

These cancellations are far more than inconveniences to ferry dependent communities.

In June, when the evening sailings for the *Kwigwis* sailings were cancelled, BCF provided water taxi service.

That doesn't do anything useful for those who are not able to walk home from the ferry terminal. Our taxi and GERTIE services are not robust enough to react to BC Ferries cancelling sailings. Nor should the default be that everyone impacted is then expected to dial a friend for a ride.

And where, exactly, are people supposed to leave their vehicles on the Nanaimo side? In the already-jam-packed parkades downtown? At who's expense? BC Ferries isn't offering to pay those fees. And no one coming home from camping is going to leave their RV downtown. But they can't exactly turn around and go back to the overbooked campgrounds either.

The *Sounder* has asked BC Ferries twice since the June cancellations if it would offer any kind of parking/transit for people stranded in Nanaimo by a cancellation of evening sailings. No answer has yet been provided.

There's nothing requiring BC Ferries to do things like: help people with parking; with transit home on the Gabriola side; or for things like changes of clothing, overnight items, replacement costs of medications (left at home with the understanding that one would be able to get home); or the need to get home for any dependents (human or otherwise, also left at home under the assumption ferries would sail on schedule). No coverage is provided for work lost either. The ripple effect of this inability to get people where they need to go impacts staffing for the rest of the community.

No government is holding BC Ferries accountable the way air passengers can hold the airlines accountable. There's zero financial incentive/penalty for BC Ferries to 'make good' on the expected level of service for ferry dependent communities. Nor is there a tribunal to file a complaint or claim to.

When the *Gwigwis* was shut down last Thursday, BCF was asked if traffic control would be provided on Taylor Bay Road. The answer: traffic control was going to be provided for the Nanaimo line, but not the Gabriola one. BCF staff were asked why, but had not answered as of press time. It could be that the City of Nanaimo has the ability to hold BC Ferries accountable to the traffic jams caused within city limits. Gabriola does not have that kind of recourse.

Islanders using ferries (marine highways) need to know the ferries will sail in a reasonable amount of time as publicly scheduled. And if that fails, where to apply so that the cost burden will not fall to them for the shortcomings of the service provider. The irony is for the last ten years, BCF staff (led by the now-fired Mark Collins) have at FAC meetings said that they are moving more towards a system that mimics that of the airlines. Reservations, ticketing, and fare systems built to encourage people to travel at off-peak hours.

Airlines are regulated to protect passengers who are left stranded, who have lost luggage, who depart later than reasonable.

The wording for the Act is already there. From air travel, we have examples.

As ferry travellers, we need the same bill of rights.



LaMontagneArt.com

Around the Island

...
Joke of the week: What do you call seagulls that live near the bay?

...
Readers were contacting the *Sounder* this past Monday, saying that there are again motorbikes going into the Treaty lands using trails off Pequod and Wild Cherry. To whomever this might apply to, please refrain from motorbiking in area where that is not permitted. There are other areas to ride in.

...
As of press time, the Fire Status for Gabriola was set at High, and only small Category 1 campfires were still allowed. 0.5 by 0.5 by 0.5 metres in size only, and not on beaches. "No Beach Fires" signs have been put up by the Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department. Within the Fire District boundary, beach fires are prohibited unless those persons lighting the fire have a permit from the GVFD to do so. The boundary of the Gabriola Fire Protection Improvement District is all of Gabriola Island and extends 100 metres (330') offshore from the high water mark.

...
A bit of confusion ensued on Monday night, as drivers attempting to leave Gabriola pulled all the way down the ramp instead of stopping at the lineup lines. Things were sorted, vehicles backed up, and sailings resumed.

...
Joke answer: Bagels

Letters to the Editor

Response to "Two ship sees better on-time performance and fewer overloads for Gabriola route" in July 20 Sounder

Your report on the new ferries was interesting and in part encouraging. Wait times are much less. But your report missed a key point that was contained in the *Nanaimo News Bulletin*. In that paper, Mr. Earle is reported as saying of the new ferries "they're smaller, but they are deeper and higher and heavier than the *Quinsam* and they use more fuel."

How could BC ferries accept such a vessel? Electric powered vehicles are commonly heavier than gas powered but why do the new vehicles have to be higher though smaller. The upper deck ramps for cars are difficult to navigate. I have already scraped the front fender on my car and, judging by the wall of the ramp, many others have done the same. In stormy weather how many people will want to climb the stairs? While it is pleasant to be on the upper deck in summer is it worth the extra weight and cost of the upper deck facilities? Incidentally, for those who choose to stay in cars during the voyage, visibility is much worse than on the *Quinsam*. One wonders whether BC Ferries put much thought into modifying the Romanian Damen class ferries for Gabriolans' needs.

Population projections for Gabriola vary widely but it is not unlikely that a significant increase will occur over the next decade and visitors add to demand in summer. Are the new ferries too small to deal with increased demand and will wait times go back to what they were with the *Quinsam* in a few years?

Finally, a two ferry solution doubles the crew requirements at a time when recruiting is difficult. We have already had one cancellation due to insufficient crew numbers. While Transport Canada decides on crewing levels, surely BC Ferries could have liaised with the Department and provided more automation to reduce crew requirements, especially since fewer passengers are at risk than on the *Quinsam*. At a time when driverless cars are on the horizon, BC Ferries seems stuck in the past.

Yours truly,
~ Richard Blanchard

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY - *The Gabriola Sounder* welcomes letters to the editor for publication. Letters must be signed and a phone number included so the writer's identity can be verified. *The Sounder* reserves the right to edit letters for legal considerations, taste, and brevity. Please try to keep your letters under 300 words to ensure your 'Letter to the Editor' appears as close to its original form as possible. Thank you to everyone who took the time to send us comments. Keep your input coming.

Smiles & Snarls

SMILE - Ahoy! To Page's Resort and Marina for their generous donation of dock space for the youth sailing camp last week. Their exceptional support made it possible to bring this program to our community!

~ *The Gabriola Rec Society*

SNARL - Two ships make for better wait times, unless of course one of them isn't running. It was just a matter of time.

SNARL - Well, on Nanaimo Pilgrimage Thursday, we are running only one ferry today. Apparently, we're missing a captain. I tried to volunteer, but they wouldn't have me...

~ *Boohoo, Nick*

TO SUBMIT A SMILE OR SNARL:

email derek@soundernews.com or call 250-247-9337. Submissions subject to editing.

Gabriola-Nanaimo Ferry Schedule	
FERRY TRAVELLERS SHOULD BE AT THE TERMINAL 10 MIN PRIOR TO SAILING TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO BOARD THEIR INTENDED SAILING.	
LEAVE GABRIOLA	LEAVE NANAIMO
• 5:15 AM <i>MON-FRI ONLY</i>	• 5:45 AM <i>MON-FRI ONLY</i>
TWO SHIP SERVICE STARTS	
• 6:20 AM	• 6:35 AM
• 7:05 AM <i>EXCEPT SUN</i>	• 6:55 AM <i>EXCEPT SUN</i>
• 7:35 AM <i>EXCEPT SUN</i>	• 7:35 AM <i>EXCEPT SUN</i>
• 8:10 AM	• 8:10 AM
• 8:45 AM	• 8:45 AM
• 9:20 AM	• 9:20 AM
• 9:55 AM	• 9:55 AM
• 10:30 AM	• 10:30 AM <i>EXCEPT WED (DC)</i>
• 11:05 AM	• 11:05 AM
• 11:40 AM	• 11:40 AM
• 12:55 PM	• 12:55 AM
• 1:30 PM	• 1:30 PM
• 2:15 PM	• 2:15 PM
• 2:50 PM	• 2:50 PM
• 3:25 PM	• 3:25 PM
• 4:00 PM	• 4:00 PM
• 4:35 PM	• 4:35 PM <i>EXCEPT SATURDAYS</i>
• 5:05 PM <i>EXCEPT SATURDAYS</i>	• 5:05 PM
TWO SHIP SERVICE ENDS	
• 5:40 PM <i>EXCEPT WED (DC)</i>	• 6:15 PM
• 6:50 PM	• 7:30 PM
• 8:00 PM	• 9:10 PM
• 9:40 PM	• 10:05 PM <i>EXCEPT WED</i>
• 10:30 PM <i>EXCEPT WED</i>	• 11:00 PM

SAILINGS WITH • ARE THE GABRIOLA-BASED SHIP, THE ISLAND KWIGWIS
DC: THESE SAILINGS ARE REPLACED BY DANGEROUS CARGO SAILINGS.
NO OTHER PASSENGERS OR VEHICLES ARE PERMITTED.
Check the ferry line-up web cameras online at www.ferrycam.clayrose.com
Thanks to the voluntary efforts of "The Lunch Bunch"

FOOD WASTE, GARBAGE AND RECYCLING SCHEDULE

RECYCLING & FOOD WASTE:
Wed. Aug. 3/Wed. Aug. 17

GARBAGE & FOOD WASTE:
Wed. Aug. 10/Wed. Aug. 24

GABRIOLA WALKING GROUP

Wednesdays,
10:00 a.m.
Everybody welcome.
Dogs only on a leash.
Most walks are 1.5 to 2 hours.

July 27: Park Bell's Landing.
Walk Sandwell Park area trails.

Aug. 3: Park Watercliff Road @ Barrett. Walk area trails.

Aug. 10: Park Tait Road. Walk Nelder Pond area trails.

BC Public Health guidelines are in effect.

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