

Office of the Chair

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Sent via email only

The Honourable Gregor Robertson
Minister of Housing and Infrastructure

The Honourable Steve MacKinnon
Minister of Transport and Internal Trade

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne
Minister of Finance

Dear Ministers:

Re: Support for Motion M-35 and sustainable federal funding for BC Ferries

On behalf of the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board, I write in support of Motion M-35 and to urge the Government of Canada to establish fair, stable, and long-term federal operational support for BC Ferries.

Reliable and affordable ferry service is essential to the economic and social well-being of coastal British Columbia. BC Ferries functions as a network of marine highways, connecting residents and businesses to employment, health care, education, family, tourism, trade, and broader economic opportunities. The affordability and reliability of these services directly affect the social and economic well-being of coastal communities, including those in the Comox Valley Regional District.

Current federal operational support for BC Ferries does not reflect its importance or the scale of service it provides. Analysis prepared by the Library of Parliament indicates that federal operational funding represents approximately 3 percent of BC Ferries' operating revenues, while the Province of British Columbia contributes approximately 24 percent and ferry users pay approximately 70 percent of system costs through fares and fees.

This contrasts sharply with federally supported ferry systems in Atlantic Canada, where federal funding covers approximately 43 percent of operating costs. In 2024-25, BC Ferries received approximately \$1.63 per passenger in federal operational support, compared with approximately \$291 per passenger for federally supported Atlantic ferry systems. On a per-capita basis, British Columbians receive approximately \$6 to \$7

The Comox Valley Regional District respectfully acknowledges the land on which it operates is on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

annually in federal ferry operational support, while Atlantic Canadians receive approximately \$120 to \$125.

This disparity exists despite British Columbians contributing the same federal taxes as other Canadians, and despite BC Ferries carrying more than 22 million passengers annually. Vancouver Island is approaching one million residents, and the existing federal funding framework no longer reflects the population, economic realities, or transportation needs of modern coastal British Columbia.

BC Ferries has stated publicly that its current financial model is not sustainable and has warned that, without additional government funding, ferry users could face fare increases of at least 30% in 2028. Significant fare increases would have serious implications for residents, workers, families, visitors, and businesses. They would increase the cost of living, raise transportation and goods-movement costs, affect local tourism, and place further pressure on communities that rely on ferry service as an essential connection to the rest of the province.

The Comox Valley Regional District is calling for equitable treatment for coastal British Columbians through a modern, fair, and sustainable federal funding approach. Accordingly, the Comox Valley Regional District respectfully requests that the Government of Canada:

- Support Motion M-35;
- establish fair, stable, and long-term federal operational support for BC Ferries;
- modernize outdated federal ferry funding arrangements to reflect current needs and service levels in coastal British Columbia;
- recognize BC Ferries as essential national transportation infrastructure;
- participate meaningfully in discussions related to the upcoming PT7 review process; and;
- work with the Province of British Columbia, BC Ferries, local governments, First Nations, and affected communities to develop sustainable long-term funding solutions that protect affordability and reliability.

A fair federal partnership is necessary to ensure ferry-dependent communities are not required to shoulder an ever-growing share of the costs of maintaining essential transportation infrastructure. Stable operational support would help protect affordable access, strengthen coastal economies, and ensure BC Ferries remains reliable and accessible for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We respectfully urge the Government of Canada to act on Motion M-35 and establish a modern federal funding framework for BC Ferries.

Sincerely,



Will Cole-Hamilton
Chair

cc Gord Johns, MP, Courtenay—Alberni
Aaron Gunn, MP, North Island-Powell River