

April 28, 2025

The Honourable David Eby,  
M.L.A, Premier of British Columbia  
PO BOX 9041 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W9E1

Dear Premier,

**Re: BC Ferry Commission's Decision on New Major Vessels**

The Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce is writing on behalf of our many community partners, listed below, to ask your office to intervene in the recent decision by the BC Ferry Commissioner to approve only four new vessels, rather than five as requested by BC Ferries.

We feel the decision by the Commissioner was not prudent in consideration of multiple factors. BC Ferries fleet is already operating at capacity with consecutive years of record setting passenger volumes being challenged by the issues of an aging fleet. As an example the 60-year-old Queen of New Westminster was recently out of service for almost 200 days proving the limited resilience of the aging fleet. The long term reliability of the fleet and affordability of repairs and maintenance present an ongoing threat to a reliable supply chain, economic growth and the visitor economy.

To delay the acquisition of a fifth vessel simply defers the cost of that build which will unquestionably be higher at a later time. The costs to repair aging vessels and the loss of revenue and impact to customers due to service disruptions is not acceptable or sustainable.

While affordability has been positioned as a guiding principle in the Commission's decision, there is no definition of "affordability" in the Commissioner's legislation. This creates a challenge when attempting to fully consider and meet the needs of businesses, taxpayers, the tourism industry and our supply chain. Affordability is about more than just fares and yet there's nothing that requires the Commissioner to apply that lens. For example, there's no requirement or indication that the risk of negative economic, supply chain and tourism impacts to BC residents and businesses were considered in the decision to reject a fifth vessel.

In this time of significant uncertainty, we agree with government that we should be investing more – not less – in growing our local economy and supporting and encouraging businesses and tourism. This decision does the opposite. We would encourage the Province to take whatever steps it can to better articulate its expectations to the Commissioner in the future, including by establishing a clear legislated definition of affordability that meets the expectations of all British Columbians.

Organizations such as The Chamber are working every day to expand the growth of business and industry. We feel it is essential for BC Ferries fleet to grow at the same pace as B.C.'s population, which is projected to increase up to 44% by 2046.

Sincerely,



Bruce Williams  
CEO, Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce

CC

Paul Nursey, CEO  
Destination Greater Victoria

Walt Judas, CEO  
TIABC

Corry Gervais, CEO  
Greater Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce

Samantha Hackett, Executive Director  
Tofino-Long Beach Chamber of Commerce

Tracey Clarke, Executive Director  
Comox Valley Chamber, Executive Director

Roberta Bowman  
Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce

Josh Jenkins, Executive Director  
Ucluelet Chamber of Commerce

Jolleen Dick,  
Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce

Daniella Novak, Chair  
Qualicum Beach Chamber of Commerce

Deb Schenk, Executive Director  
Sooke Region Chamber of Commerce

Katherine Worsley, P/T Manager/Coordinator  
Cowichan Lake District Chamber of Commerce

Lauren Underhill, Executive Director  
Mayne Island Chamber of Commerce

Mary Ruth Snyder  
Campbell River Chamber of Commerce

Elizabeth Aman-Hume, Executive Director  
Port Hardy Chamber of Commerce

Peter Matthews, Chais  
Chemainus Chamber of Commerce

Kelly Darwin, Chair  
WestShore Chamber of Commerce

Carly Pereboom, Executive Director  
Tourism Nanaimo

Brad Parsell, Executive Director  
Tourism Tofino

Blain Sepos, Executive Director  
Parksville-Qualicum Tourism Association