

The Gabriola Bowen Scandal

The proposal to cut the last two sailings and the first one on Saturday and Sunday morning is a humiliation and contempt based on political preference and extortion of the first order.

At the Rate Payers town hall meeting on Dec. 2, the frustration and desperation of participants was evident. It was standing room only and the mood of the meeting was summarized as angry towards BC Ferries bad management and insensitivity to our transportation needs. Why do we have to pay the price for such failure?

It is offensive to ask users of Route 19, Gabriola-Nanaimo, to give away those sailings to get \$800,000.00 in savings.

This is why:

For the comparison we will use Route 8 (Horseshoe Bay-Bowen Island) as it is very similar to Route 19.

- Both routes are 20 minutes in length,
- Bowen has 3400 residents compared to Gabriola's 4100 and –
- We both commute to a major town which provides work and services.

1. Gabriola is being asked to save \$800,000.00 compared to \$260,000.00 for Bowen Island.
This is \$195.00 per person on Gabriola versus \$79.00 per person on Bowen Island
2. Bowen Island ferry lost \$3.4 million last year compared to \$1.1 million for the Quinsam
This is a loss of \$280.00 per person on Gabriola and almost \$1,000.00 on Bowen
3. Government subsidy totalled \$6.8 million on Bowen and half of that on Gabriola: \$3.4 million
This is a government hand-out of \$2,000.00 per person on Bowen compared to only \$840.00 per person on Gabriola
4. After the planned cuts we will have less trips than Bowen: 5335 to 4898 for Gabriola

The questions are:

1. Why are Gabriola taxpayers subsidising Bowen Island residents at the tune of over \$1000.00 per year per resident when the Bowen Island average income is twice the Gabriola average income?
2. Why are Gabriola taxpayers subsidizing a less populated community with a vessel that uses twice as many crews than the Quinsam: 14 versus 7?
3. Why are we being asked to cut more trips per day than a less economical route?
4. Why are we being asked to cut service when other areas of price cutting and price management have not been attempted?
 - a. Time of day and day of the week pricing (Demand management)
 - b. Time of day and day of week for free senior fares

An item that has been on the agenda for the last eight years

Request

On the basis of these inequalities and blatant disregard for fairness and justice we request the following:

1. No sailing cuts for Route 19
2. No senior discounts for the 3:45 and 5:00 pm sailings
3. No Experience Card usage for vehicles on the 3:45 and 5:00 sailings
4. This would give additional revenue of \$260,000.00 which is the same as the savings being asked for the people of Bowen Island.

This is fairness, intelligent and progressive marketing as well as a template to be applied to other routes for the sake of ferry users. This will also prevent the erosion of private property values and give a choice to the shift workers.

It is a solution that gives sustainability, affordability and maintains the Social Contract to which the Government and BC Ferries have created with our community.

Trying to bring this inequality to the attention of the Ferry Commission would be worthless. Do you know why?

The Deputy BC Ferry Commissioner is Sheldon T. Stoilen, BSc, CA.

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