I have yet to see a complete list of the B.C. Ferries failings, but here is a start:

1) Ferries management in Victoria has sixteen department heads, and occupies seven stories covering a square block in downtown Victoria. The cost of this is hidden in 'operating costs' in all the individual ferry annual reports, which includes vacation advertising, and big ferry management.

2) The Duke Point and foot passenger combination to Nanaimo worked well during the Nanaimo dock accident. With no Nanaimo Transit connections at Duke Point, it was possible for foot passengers to get to Tsawwassen and the Vancouver Airport from Gabriola or Nanaimo.

3) Nanaimo has two large ferry terminals. After the 'hard landing', the Duke Point ferry ran out of Departure Bay.

4) The B.C. Ferries Board of Directors costs $449,000 per year, with decisions now being made by the B.C. Government.

5) The communication within B.C. Ferries is difficult. The 'hard landing' occurred because the bridge did not know that one propulsion unit was not available when they went into the dock at Duke Point.

6) Although not in regular use anywhere, automated navigation, similar to the commercial aircraft systems, could have prevented the northern disaster.

7) Terminal planning has never looked at allowing independent retail stores or restaurants to operate within the terminal gates. A large captured audience occasionally can browse a few tents set up in the summer at Duke Point, if they can stand the fish aroma.

8) Ferries management is focused entirely on the major ferries serving Vancouver Island, even though these routes are making money, thanks to the shop and cafeterias. Local commuter ferries are the money losers, and are completely ignored, except as a disposal area for things no longer used on the big ferries.

9) All cost increases on the commuter ferries result in fare increases. 'Well no one told you to live on an island.' All other commuter transportation from rail to busses to roads, have costs shared between property owners, government, and fares, roughly one third each. Commuter ferries should be transferred to regional district transportation, which might actually allow some coordination of schedules.

10) Garbage trucks, busses, and large highway rigs are all transferring to compressed natural gas as a fuel source. Adjusting for bulk purchase of diesel, fuel savings calculators for the trucking industry show fuel costs to be 52% of diesel. Refueling may require more time than the present once a week. The four engines on a commuter ferry are roughly the same size as a big transport truck. Ferries management will only discuss liquefied natural gas for the big ferries, ignoring the benefits on the routes which require the subsidies.

11) With the Wednesday refueling not running, a 10:25 run should be substituted so that the 8:20 is not the last sailing from Nanaimo.

12) Commuter passengers would love to have a fresh cup of coffee on their way to work. Just look at the street in Vancouver. A local entrepreneur was running a coffee shop in a V.W. beetle, and offered to run it on the ferry, with training and union approval, thus reducing the staffing requirement by one. This was refused because management thought there might be more cleanup required.

13) Coffee was available at a small shop on the city ferry terminal, with the owner wishing to invest in updated facilities. Ferry management reduced the lease terms to one month. The site is now covered with gravel.

14) The ferry computer department managed to replace printed tickets with a commuter debit card, mostly because some people were getting better at printing their own tickets. They still can't run different fares for low traffic times. If you don't have enough money on the card for the fare, you can't add the remainder in cash. Some have been stranded overnight in the city without any funds. The final result is that commuter cards without enough value for a fare, will remain in existence, but can never be used without adding more funds.

15) Time of day pricing is practised my most transportation authorities. A higher price on rush hours, such as full pricing, with a lower price on the under utilized sailings leaves options for people with flexible schedules.

16) Radio frequency identification tags could reduce or eliminate the terminal staff. Many runs use a ferry crew member to come up and direct traffic, with a hand held device for the tourists without I.D. tags.

17) Schedule changes are still possible, such as a gap in the middle or adding five minutes to the run time to reduce fuel usage.

18) Shift workers may be required to move off Gabriola if they cannot get to their shift by removal of the first or last runs. The 5:25 sailing is necessary to get to the 6:30 Departure Bay sailing for some shift workers.

19) If the ferry or city terminal is out of commission, foot passengers can board at the big dock in the city harbour. You cannot pay the fare at the city dock, because there is no portable hand held card reader. Hence you have to walk over to the existing terminal, get a ticket, and then walk back to the city dock, by that time the foot passenger ferry is gone.

20) Labour saving methods such as license plate readers, radio frequency id tags, scanning for vehicle length, and reading the new B.C. health card are far beyond the capability of the ferry computer department. A vehicle length scanning system was provided to B.C. Ferries for free written in Visual Basic. They couldn't run Visual Basic.

21) Seniors still sail for free during commuter rush hours, but have to pay during the low commuter traffic on weekends. This is actually a B.C. Transportation policy that can't be changed.

22) Terminal planning is even worse. The city ladies facilities were extremely cramped, so eventually management, encouraged by terminal employees, had the facilities upgraded with more space. Immediately after that the waiting room was torn down, because it was built one foot over the property line, and replaced by a two sided tent,

with no heat, in the winter. The new waiting room cost half a million dollars, and is, if anything smaller than the last one.

23) Foot passengers are herded up a long access ramp on the city terminal. The kids race, the fast walkers walk, and the elderly potter with a cane. Eventually they are clear, and the traffic moves off the ferry. Going on it is the same thing, except that it happens twice, once at the start of loading, and again at the end for all the slowpokes. The main traffic ramp is held up by a floating barge, with enough flotation to hold up a concrete truck full of concrete. A second passenger ramp could be attached to the floating section, with access to the ferry independent of the traffic ramp. Same thing at the island end. Changes to the ferry and the floating bumpers would be required for foot passengers to avoid the engine room and access the passenger compartment directly.

24) There is a pop machine on the ferry, but water used to cost $0.50 more than coke. At one time there was a water fountain, but it was removed due to difficulties in the approval process. Water is available to the crew.

25) New safety evacuation slides have been added, with an inflatable life raft at the end. The major difficulty is that you have to go into the cabin, where the life jackets are available at the muster station, in order to wait to depart. So this means that people in vehicles on the open deck have to enter a cabin behind a steel door if the vessel requires evacuation.

26) During the last refit, fire monitors fitted to the four corners of the Quinsam up on the roof. These are designed to provide a powerful salt water stream, equivalent to a large fire hose. Now a bit of a warning, if you happen to be standing on the deck and get in front of the water, there is no way you can stand up, in spite of the directions to report to the muster stations in the passenger cabins. The process of firing water onto a fire, likely caused by vehicle fuel leaking on the deck, is more or less guaranteed to spread the fire. The original equipment was hand held foam extinguishers using effective biodegradable foam. These were removed because the regulations could not allow biodegradable foam to get into the ocean. Perhaps a ferry full of flaming vessels would be better with the federal regulators?

27) The last refit also removed the thrust nozzles from around the propellers greatly reducing the thrust, because sometimes they clogged up. The result, after the refit, was the vessel was too slow to maintain the schedule. But this was good, because the new schedule, with added crew overtime, eliminated the afternoon break which had traffic backing up onto the road. Turns out the slow speed saved more fuel costs than the overtime.

28) Long term planning for the small commuter ferries is entirely based on vehicles, not passengers. Like using freight cars with seats for commuter rail lines. More space, tables, views, coffee shops, pedestrian ramps on a second level would serve the present users, as well as being a great treat for tourists. Presently tourists stand at the bow, until they get cold, and then retreat to their cars.

29) Transport Canada have always been blamed for excessive crew levels, with media reports of Washington State Ferries with half our crew levels. Presently the Quinsam minimum safe manning requirement is seven, required for 293 passengers in 2009. The expense of safety measures has to be compared to the probability of an event occurring. A fire in a vehicle on deck is not improbable, and might expand or threaten the crew, requiring evacuation. Fighting a fire, and evacuating up to 293 passengers

would keep the seven crew totally occupied. Only with a significant improvement in fuel fire capability could we review the same manning levels.

See www.ferry.gabriola.org for past letters and reports.

Send suggestions, not included in the above, to ratepayers@gabriola.org.