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Via Email: David.Hahn@bcferries.com

July 15, 2008

David Hahn
CEO and President
BC Ferry Services Inc.
1112 Fort Street
Victoria BC V8V 4V2

Dear Mr. Hahn:

I am writing on behalf of the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee, the elected local government body with jurisdiction for land use and community planning in the Gabriola Island Local Trust Area, as established under the *Islands Trust Act*.

We have learned via the media that you are suggesting Gabriolans be polled on whether they would like a bridge instead of a ferry. The Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee is opposed to bridges and to the proposed survey for four reasons:

1 - The community position is clearly articulated in the Islands Trust Policy Statement, and in both Mudge and Gabriola's Official Community Plans:

Islands Trust Policy Statement: *"It is Trust Council's policy that no island in the Trust Area should be connected to Vancouver Island, the mainland or another island by a bridge or tunnel, notwithstanding the existing bridge between North and South Pender Islands."* (Policy 5.3.2)

Gabriola Island's Official Community Plan (1997): *"The development of a bridge or other form of fixed transportation link of any kind connecting Gabriola to Vancouver Island or any other island or the B.C. Lower Mainland is not supported and is contrary to the provisions of this plan."* (8.1.k)

Mudge Island's Official Community Plan (2008): *"This Plan attempts to preserve the Mudge Island Planning Areas unique environment for future generations with the following goals: ... 3. To keep the islands as a refuge from the pressures of urban life, as partially facilitated by the absence of ferry service and bridges between these and other islands. ... Transportation Policy 4: No island in the Plan Area shall be connected to any other island by a bridge."*

All three policy documents resulted from extensive community input and were approved by the Provincial Minister of Community Services. Although the Islands Trust receives requests to update all sorts of elements of the Islands Trust Policy Statement and the Official Community Plans of islands in the Trust Area, members of the public have never suggested that the Islands Trust Council or Local Trust Committees review the bridge policies. In the preceding term, as MLA for Gabriola, Mike Hunter said, "if the OCP does not support a bridge, that is the end of it".

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2 – The environmental impacts of a bridge are worrying. Even if the public wanted a bridge, it would be environmentally irresponsible to proceed. In 1981 and 1992, it was proposed that a bridge be built across Dodd Narrows, over Mudge Island, and across False Narrows to Gabriola. Parks Canada's National Marine Conservation Area feasibility study surveyed Dodd and False Narrows last year and recommended their protection in this new marine park, based on their extremely high ecological values. We are also concerned that greenhouse gas construction impacts and local air quality impacts make the bridge proposal inconsistent with Provincial policy. Past proposals have involved the Vancouver ferry traffic docking on Gabriola (at Drumbeg Provincial Park), and driving across Gabriola and Mudge Islands to Vancouver Island, exacerbating local environmental impacts. Rising sea levels and the vital need to reduce reliance on conventional automobiles also seem inconsistent with new bridge-building.

3 - Local Trustees fear the survey process will divert community energy away from positive projects. The survey and attendant debate will consume a lot of time, because so many in the community have fought this before and won't let it slip through. There are many constructive things the community is working on – car pooling, community gardens, growing local food, public transit, ecosystem mapping, emergency preparedness, community health care clinic, and more. There are too many other important ways for our community to spend its time, rather than fighting the bridge again.

4 – Poor process: The September 1994 "Protocol Agreement" and "Letter of Understanding on Ferry Service in the Islands Trust Area Between: British Columbia Ferry Corporation and Islands Trust" are intended to "foster an ongoing consultative process between Islands Trust and BC Ferries to coordinate their respective roles within the Trust Area relative to the land use implications of ferry services".

The Islands Trust Policy Statement also speaks to this:

"Trust Council holds that local trust committees and island municipalities should be consulted and involved in the decision-making process regarding provision of utilities, transportation services or facilities that might affect land use in their local planning area." (Policy 5.3.1)

We feel it is inappropriate for BC Ferries to be considering getting involved in an issue that is addressed by a policy of the Islands Trust (and endorsed by the Province) without first consulting the Islands Trust Council and/or the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee.

We also request that you ensure the Gabriola Ferry Advisory Committee is operating within its Terms of Reference, which we presume means formally convening in a public and advertised meeting to consider your request for advice. You have put the FAC in a difficult position, and I am sure they will want to consult with the public before formulating a recommendation to you.

We request that you reconsider your proposal, and that you consult with the Islands Trust, the local government provincially charged with the preservation and protection of the unique Gulf Islands environment, when considering changes in transportation services and facilities that might affect land use in the Islands Trust Area.

Thank you for your attention,



Kim Benson
Chair, Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee

pc: Hon. Kevin Falcon, Minister of Transportation
Ferry Advisory Committee Chair Andre Lemieux andre.lemieux@shaw.ca
Leonard Krog, MLA-Nanaimo
Bill Henwood, Parks Canada
Islands Trust Executive Committee