



FEB 13 2009

Kim Benson, Chair
Islands Trust Council
1627 Fort Street, Suite 200
Victoria BC V8R 1H8

Reference: 174579
Your File: PG/11-1

Dear Chair Benson:

Re: BC Ferries

Thank you for your letter of November 5, 2008, expressing your council's support for the Ferry Advisory Committee Chairs' recommendations for a minor routes strategy. Please accept my apologies for the lateness of my reply.

Our island and coastal communities are an irreplaceable part of British Columbia, and I know the health of the Islands Trust depends on an affordable and reliable ferry service. As part of Premier Campbell's Ten Point Economic Plan, the provincial government increased funding through our contract with BC Ferries to stimulate British Columbia's economy. The 33 per cent reduction in ferry fares during December and January combined with the restoration of full service on the Sunshine Coast and major routes has benefited many British Columbians.

Please be assured that our government's commitment to ferry service remains substantial at almost \$175 million in annual funding through our contract with BC Ferries. This level of provincial taxpayer support for ferries is twenty five times what it was a decade ago. To help put our support for ferries in context, it's worth noting that my ministry has invested about \$600 million for the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project, which will provide good service for 25 years. During this same 25-year time period, we can anticipate, at current funding levels, several billion dollars of taxpayer support for our coastal ferry system.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

Kevin Falcon
Minister

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Copy to: Premier Gordon Campbell

Honourable Murray Coell
Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
MLA, Saanich North and the Islands

Blair Lekstrom
Minister of Community Development
MLA, Peace River South

Honourable Stan Hagen
Minister of Agriculture and Lands
MLA, Comox Valley

Honourable Colin Hansen
Minister of Finance and
Minister Responsible for the Olympics
MLA, Vancouver-Quilchena

Honourable Joan McIntyre
Minister of State for Intergovernmental Relations
MLA, West Vancouver-Garibaldi

Ron Cantelon
MLA, Nanaimo-Parksville

David Hahn, President and CEO
BC Ferries

Jas Chonk, Secretary
Executive Office
Islands Trust Council