**Hornby Ferry Action Discussion Group**

**February, 2025: Looking to 2026 and new ferries arriving to the Minor Routes**

**The Overlooked Need for Equity: Hornby Island’s Aging Vessel and Subsidy Discrimination within the Minor Routes**

Hornby Island’s ferry service, Route 22, is a critical lifeline for its year-round residents, commercial traffic, and tourism economy.

However, it is served by the oldest ferry in BC Ferries’ ferry-dependent minor route fleet, the Kahloke, built in 1973. This aging vessel, now underperforming original specifications, after a 2021 Transport Canada safety review reduced its weight-carrying capacity by over 10%, represents a growing problem for the community. Despite the ferry’s declining capacity and increased route costs, Hornby Island’s ferry service continues to be ignored in favor of other routes with newer vessels and larger subsidies.

**1. The Age of the Vessel: Why Is Hornby’s Ferry Not a BCF Priority for Replacement?**

The Kahloke is past its prime, and its age is now a major limitation for Hornby Island’s transportation needs. As the oldest, smallest vessel, in the ferry dependent minor routes, it continually can’t meet the growing demands of the island’s year-round residents or the influx of tourists. Commercial traffic, a critical part of Hornby’s local economy, is particularly impacted by the weight restrictions, leaving businesses with limited access to providing vital goods and supplies.

Despite these challenges, Hornby Island has been overlooked in terms of vessel upgrades. BC Ferries is ordering new vessels for other routes, yet Hornby is still stuck with its aging ferry. **This discrepancy in attention is especially frustrating when you consider that other routes with newer ferries continue to receive priority in the fleet replacement process.**

**2. The Subsidy Discrepancy: Why Is Hornby Island Left Behind?**

BC Ferries’ subsidy allocation is another area where Hornby Island faces inequity. Despite being an important tourism destination and having a vital role in the provincial park system, Hornby receives one of the lowest subsidies in the fleet. Larger, more populated routes tend to get newer ferries and larger subsidies, while Hornby—with its smaller population and limited political influence—is stuck with an old, underperforming ferry.

This subsidy disparity directly impacts the reliability of ferry service for residents who depend on it for work, health care, and education, as well as businesses that rely on consistent commercial traffic. When other routes with newer vessels receive funding for upgrades and more efficient service, Hornby Island’s ferry service suffers from inadequate investment, despite its vital role in the provincial tourism economy and supply chain.

**3. A Rumored Inequity: Quinitsa Instead of a New Vessel?**

**There’s increasing concern that when the next four new ferries arrive in 2026, Hornby Island will again be left behind. The 2026/7 influx of minor route new vessels will bring the total number of Island Class ferries in the Minor Route fleet to TEN.**

The Quinitsa, built in 1977, is rumored for deployment to Route 22 once the new vessels are introduced. This would be another step backward for Hornby Island, as the Quinitsa is nearly as old as the Kahloke and would be a poor substitute for a modern, reliable ferry. The Quinitsa is designed for calmer water service, and is not designed for the environmental impacts (wind, waves, tides) that exist in Lambert Channel in the winter. It is designed for use in calm waters.

Ultimately, the possibility of another old vessel being assigned to Route 22 reflects a systemic issue in BC Ferries’ planning—Hornby continues to be neglected in favor of other minor routes which receive newer vessels and higher subsidies. **Why should Hornby Island be expected to continue relying on outdated ferries, especially when new vessels are becoming available for other routes that already have existing vessels newer than the Hornby ferry?**

**4. Route 21: Addressing the Reliability of the Baynes Sound Connector**

**In addition to the issues facing Route 22, Hornby Island is also reliant on Route 21, which serves both Hornby and Denman Islands via the Baynes Sound Connector.** The ferry service on Route 21 between the mainland and Denman/Hornby Islands is plagued by two major issues: the cable ferry in use is both unreliable and lacks sufficient capacity.

The “one off” cable ferry has been plagued by chronic mechanical issues since installation in 2016, leading to frequent service disruptions and creating further uncertainty for residents and businesses who depend on this route for essential connections to Vancouver Island. **Frequent disruptions, overcrowding, unsafe lineups on main roads/highways, and excessive wait times significantly affect residents and businesses on Hornby and Denman Islands.**

**In the short term, replacing the cable ferry with a more serviceable vessel like the Quinsam, expected to be available when the four new Island Class ferries arrive in 2026/27, would address these problems by offering the necessary capacity and reliability, in a cost effective manner.**

For clarity, a mid to long-term solution will require replacing the aged Quinsam ferry with a more modern vessel designed to handle growing demand and ensure consistent service, which is essential for the well-being of the islands' communities.

5**. The Case for Equitable Treatment: A Call for Action**

It’s time to address the injustice faced by Hornby and Denman Islands due to the lack of serviceable vessels.

Specifically, on Hornby, the age of the vessel and the discrepancy in subsidies are not just operational issues—they are a matter of fairness and basic community needs. Hornby Island deserves equal treatment in the allocation of subsidies and vessel replacement. **As other routes are receiving newer ferries and larger subsidies, why is Hornby Island continually overlooked?**

Investing in a new ferry for Route 22 would provide reliable service for both residents and commercial traffic. It would also demonstrate a commitment to fair treatment for all ferry-dependent communities, regardless of their size or political influence. Hornby Island should not have to settle for an aging ferry while other routes enjoy modern, larger vessels that are suited to the needs of the whole fleet.

**6. Conclusion: Equal Investment for Hornby Island**

**The age of the ferry and the subsidy disparity for Hornby Island are deeply connected issues that require immediate attention. BC Ferries must address the inequity in both vessel allocation and subsidy distribution by prioritizing Hornby Island for a new, modern vessel.**

The current situation is unsustainable and unfair to both the residents and businesses who depend on reliable ferry service. If an Island Class ferry is not deployed on Route 22 when the new ferries arrive in 2026/27, it will send a clear message that Hornby Island continues to be left behind—a community that, despite its importance to the provincial tourism economy and residents’ needs, is continually overlooked.

**It’s time for BC Ferries to recognize the vital importance of Hornby Island and invest in its future by providing a modern, reliable ferry that meets the needs of its residents, businesses, and tourists—and ends the cycle of neglect that has lasted far too long.**

 Appendix – THE FACTS & FIGURES