

# BRITISH COLUMBIA FERRIES PERFORMANCE TERM 6 ADDENDUM SUBMISSION FOR ROUTES 21 AND 22 Addendum March 15, 2023 to our PT6 Submission March 7, 2023

We, the Hornby Island Ferry Action Discussion Group, make this Addendum to our March 7<sup>th</sup> submission. This Addendum provides additional information including addressing the BCF Supplemental Report, received March 8/23.

Our intent is to provide information to assist the British Columbia Ferries Commissioner (the “Commissioner”) in establishing the price caps and anticipated spending for Performance Term Six. The operating plan, capital expenditures, and fares BC Ferries charges for core ferry services are regulated by the Commissioner in accordance with the Coastal Ferry Act (the “Act”).

A lot of the BCF Supplemental report has to do with staffing. It is a well written report, with proactive planning to turn things around. We respectfully submit information of a local nature, which may assist B.C. Ferries in their strategic planning to ensure delivery of reliable, affordable, and safe ferry service to Hornby and Denman Islands, and coastal B.C.

This Addendum is additional to the information presented in our March 7<sup>th</sup> report, although some of that information is highlighted for relevance in this response to the BC Ferries Supplemental document. The main body of our feedback rests in our March 7<sup>th</sup> report.

This Addendum has 3 sections & an appendix:

1. General comments
2. Government \$500 million injection of new money into the ferry system for coastal B.C
3. Additional information
  - a. Capital program & maintenance
    - i. Vessel capacity
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## Appendix:

- A. So Say the Ferrymen – Passion, Pride, Professional

## 1. General comments

The supplemental document addresses current levels of service, and service through Performance Term 6, March, 2028.

To date, there has been no acknowledgement of the dire straights that Routes 21 and 22 have been subjected to. The word many people are now using to describe the service to these two routes is “tragic”.

- The Baynes Sound Connector (Route 21) was, and remains, unreliable.
- The carrying capacity of the Kahloke (Route 22) was reduced in November 2021.<sup>1</sup>
- Ferry traffic lining up on the main roads is dangerous.
- Year-round unpalatable wait times have economic and social opportunity costs to residents and the island communities.
- Off-peak season, Route 22 saw extended waits and shuttling, because of the lower weight allowance of the Kahloke. Additionally, increases of approx. 20% in population (census 2016 to 2021) on both islands means that residents of Hornby Island miss their connecting ferry to Vancouver Island on an almost daily basis. BCF has never shown the leadership required to engage with the two Island communities about the issue of sharing deck space, or having through-fare dedicated runs, on the shared ferry.

## 2. Government \$500 million injection of new money into the ferry system for coastal B.C.

The recent news of the \$500. million injection of money, by the Provincial Government, into the ferry service has been received with great excitement. In Premier Eby’s press release his empathy, and focus, on affordable, safe, and reliable ferry service for coastal B.C. was very much appreciated. It appears that our government is providing an opportunity for BCF to re-evaluate their PT 6 spending priorities.

We thank the Premier and Ministers Fleming and Osborne for their advocacy and the Service Board and Authority Board for their oversight.

## 3. Additional Information

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<sup>1</sup> In November 2021, as a result of a routine lightship survey, required by Transport Canada, the weight carrying capacity of the Kalohke was reduced from 88 tons to 80 tons. Did this factor into BC Ferries report and heat maps?

## a. Capital program & maintenance

### i. Vessel Capacity

From the compelling, and well researched, information in Our Group's March 7, 2023 report on the BCF PT 6 report to the Commissioner it is apparent that the planned supply of vessels to Routes 21 and 22 is diminished from previous levels of service, and is insufficient and unrealistic.

Is a legislative change required to ensure that BC Ferries cannot claim to meet their contractual obligations by using vessels with diminished capacity?

Is capacity, and the ability to move a specified amount and weight of traffic crucial to performance metrics being met? This is a critical question in evaluating whether the service contract is being met.

A quick summary:

- I. The Hornby route (#22) needs a ferry with increased capacity year-round. The vessel, Kahloke, has had a diminished carrying capacity since the Nov.2021 light ship survey results were implemented.

The solution is to immediately deploy a larger, more serviceable ferry.

- II. The shared route (# 21) needs priority planning on building a more serviceable, interoperable vessel. The 2016 deployment of the Baynes Sound Connector has lower weight bearing capacity than it's predecessor.

Potential, year-round solutions:

As one of the two terminals for Route 21 is on Vancouver Island, there is an opportunity to investigate the Buckley Bay side of the route being tied into the Vancouver Island electrical grid. This might be an immediate opportunity, as the Premier did indicate that part of the \$500. Million in additional money was to be used to electrify the fleet.

Are there potential stop-gap solutions for service on Route 21? Are there any old ferries kicking around that could fill the void temporarily?

- a) An existing fleet vessel of about 65 car capacity, and increased weight bearing capacity, is available in the Mayne Queen. For a mere \$2. Million this ferry can be given an overhaul to extend its life. Currently, it appears in the Supplemental report that BCF is planning on decommissioning this ferry. Decommissioned ferries sell on the open market for trifling amounts of money. Yet they remain in service in other countries. Time to keep our fleet and provide service to the people of British Columbia?

- b) Alternatively, the proposed solution for the seasonal operation of the Kahloke running in tandem with the Baynes Sound Connector could be a bandaid year-round solution for a few years, until a new vessel is ordered and built. The Kahloke is already 50 years old,
- c) Inflationary pressures, due to delays on the ferries, push up the daily cost of living for residents of the Islands.

Proof that the current vessels are not meeting the capacity promised, or delivered.

### Winter Overloads - **Real time, real stories:**

#### A. Route 22, Kahloke, sampling of the daily experience in overloads:

##### Thursday, March 9, 2023:

- First 4 sailings from Gravelly Bay to Hornby (departing Denman East) had a weight overload,
- 13 commercial vehicle overloads total (one sailing had 5 commercial left behind). They shuttled to clear the commercial overloads.

##### Friday, March 10, 2023:

- First 5 sailings from Gravelly Bay had weight overloads
- 13 commercial vehicles and 9 cars overloaded total

#### B. Route 21, Baynes Sound Connector, sampling of the daily experience in overloads:

From a representative for the Denman Island Haulers, (sourcing product on Vancouver Island. Deliveries to Denman and Hornby Islands).

Here is a typical BSC overload example from Feb 8/23:

- arrived at DW 9:30 to start second round trip from Denman to Vancouver Island.
- 9:40 overloaded did not make it on
- 10:40 made it on and left a few minutes later even though excess traffic
- retrieved material from Cumberland Sand & Gravel and made it back to BB at 11:50 (going for 12:05 ferry) just to watch BSC leaving. Obviously had gone into shuttle mode.
- 13:05 loaded on
- total extra wait time for one hauling trip from Denman to Vancouver Island back to Denman: 2 hours and 25 minutes. That's expensive gravel.**
- also please note that for the month of February due to weather and other situations I only hauled a total of 8 days. I also experienced BSC overload waits Feb 9, 10, 16, 21 and 24.

From Haulers' perspective, even without the constant breakdowns, the lack of capacity and the slow speed of the BSC is problematic for those of us who are consistently going back and forth even during non-peak times. Peak times are even worse, becoming almost impossible to do business and compete against larger trucking fleets from town.

The need is NOW, not waiting for Performance Term 6 or any further evaluation.

**Real time statistics. The proof lies in the overloads, experienced NOW in the dead of winter**, on the Baynes Sound Connector.

Statistics on Overloads, February 1 to March 9, 2023.

DATE	TERMINAL & DEPART. TIME	Veh.left.behind	SHUTTLING & NOTES
01-Feb-23	BB 15:03	6	
01-Feb-23	BB 17:04	5	
02-Feb-23	DW 09:43	4	
02-Feb-23	DW 10:44	1	
07-Feb-23	DW 09:42	5	
08-Feb-23	DW 09:40	16	
09-Feb-23	DW 09:43	7	
10-Feb-23	DW 09:41	6	
10-Feb-23	DW 10:40	5	
10-Feb-23	BB 15:05	12	shuttle 16:21 - 17:40
10-Feb-23	BB 16:02	14	
10-Feb-23	BB 16:39	3	
15-Feb-23	DW 09:40	6	
15-Feb-23	DW 10:41	12	shuttle 16:19 - 17:40
15-Feb-23	DW 11:50	4	
15-Feb-23	BB 15:11	13	
15-Feb-23	BB 16:02	13	
16-Feb-23	BB 15:02	4	
16-Feb-23	BB 16:02	5	
16-Feb-23	DW 16:43	7	
16-Feb-23	BB 17:05	7	
17-Feb-23	DW 09:45	2	
17-Feb-23	BB 12:11	11	
17-Feb-23	BB 13:07	10	
17-Feb-23	BB 14:03	7	
17-Feb-23	DW 14:40	1	shuttle 16:20 - 17:40
17-Feb-23	BB 15:04	10	
17-Feb-23	BB 16:03	24	
17-Feb-23	BB 16:39	3	
20-Feb-23	DW 11:50	4	
20-Feb-23	DW 12:45	6	
20-Feb-23	DW 13:43	12	

DATE	TERMINAL & DEPART. TIME	Veh.left.behind	SHUTTLING & NOTES
21-Feb-23	DW 08:03	16	shuttle 09:23 - 10:44
21-Feb-23	DW 08:44	16	
21-Feb-23	DW 10:44	4	
21-Feb-23	DW 11:46	2	
24-Feb-23	DW 09:42	1	
24-Feb-23	DW 10:40	3	
24-Feb-23	BB 17:01	4	
28-Feb-23	DW 11:45	4	
01-Mar-23	DW 10:40	18	shuttle 10:40 - not reported
02-Mar-23	DW 10:39	1	
02-Mar-23	BB 14:00	2	
02-Mar-23	DW 14:42	2	
02-Mar-23	BB 16:00	4	
02-Mar-23	DW 16:41	1	
03-Mar-23	BB 15:01	1	shuttle 20:11 - 21:10
03-Mar-23	BB 16:02	5	
03-Mar-23	BB 17:02	5	
03-Mar-23	BB 20:11	20+	
07-Mar-23	DW 10:40	11	
07-Mar-23	DW 11:48	6	
08-Mar-23	DW 10:40	7	
08-Mar-23	DW 11:49	1	
08-Mar-23	DW 12:52	4	
08-Mar-23	BB 16:07	1	
09-Mar-23	BB 14:02	7	
09-Mar-23	BB 16:02	2	
09-Mar-23	BB 17:06	4	

BCF, and the Commissioner have already acknowledged that the Peak season performance on Routes 21 and 22 is poor.

Plans are proposed, subject to crewing, to put the Quinitsa on the Hornby route, and run the Kahloke in tandem with the BSC on Route 21 for the two summer months.

The challenge is then for the other 10 months of the year.

**To date, there has been no proposal to address the lack of reliable service during 83% of the annual service term.**

**LACK OF VESSEL CAPACITY IS NOT SINGULARLY A PEAK SEASON PROBLEM. FERRY CAPACITY ON ROUTES 21 & 22 NEED TO BE IMPROVED YEAR-ROUND IMMEDIATELY.**

iii. [Service levels – minor to major](#)



*What becomes clear in the BCF PT 6 Supplemental Report is that it will be more difficult to get onto a mainland ferry (Nanaimo - Horseshoe Bay for example), without a reservation.*

*That will be unfair to Hornby people, who might miss that reservation because of the unreliable service for Hornby/Denman.*

*Dr. Colin Boyd: "Consider the cascading effects of delays re main ferry reservations. But this is but one example of the whole set of problems to do with planning time- keeping regarding doctors' appointments, car servicing and plane catching for islanders. In technical transport analytical terms what is happening is that the variance of total waiting and travel time is increasing starkly. For bus and train travel increased variance in total time is the strongest motivation for passengers to change to another travel mode - it is the greatest irritant. But increased variance in total time for frequent bus and travel is usually on a small scale of a matter of minutes, whereas here for ferry travel it is measured in hours, something that can be life-changing. Mode switching away from ferry use is only available to the rich, who can use private boats, helicopters and float planes, which indeed we are seeing more use of. In all my years of studying transport I have never seen statistical analysis of total journey times (mean, mode, Poisson distribution, variance etc..) applied to scheduled ferry travel services. Maybe now is the time to pressure BCF to start using them as measures of performance?"*

#### iv. [Service term](#)

Have service levels declined on Routes 21 & 22?

Definitely, reduced sailings and seasonal schedules have been imposed. There is less service to these communities now than there was 20 years ago. That despite increases in populations and demand.

## b. Labour & development

### i. [Spending plans:](#)

On page 37 (5.1.d - Indirect Operations and Administration) of the Ferries PT 6 Supplement, there is discussion of some employee categories where significant numbers of positions have been recently added. One such category is "Marketing and Customer Experience". For years now, B.C. Ferries has often been described as having a costly, over-bloated layer of administrative & management staff, resulting in much wasted money. One example - why would what for all intents and purposes amounts to a monopoly public transportation company, need marketing and "B.C. Vacations" staff?

It appears that Ferries needs a significant streamlining of its administrative/management staffing model, so that it can better apply its funding to its purpose of "... providing safe, reliable service to the people and communities of British Columbia's west coast ..." (page 40 of the supplement)

The chart on pg. 36 for exempt staff is telling:

**Table 11 – Exempt Profile from Fiscal 2019 through Fiscal 2024\***

Exempt Profile	Fiscal 2019	Fiscal 2020	Fiscal 2021	Fiscal 2022	Fiscal 2023	Fiscal 2024
Capital Program	92	76	75	63	69	85
Direct Operational	265	252	248	248	248	267
Maintenance	34	33	30	30	32	37
Indirect Operational and Administration	425	394	404	411	483	511
<b>Total</b>	<b>816</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>757</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>900</b>

\* Results for Fiscal 2019 to 2022 reflect the exempt profile as of July 1 for each respective fiscal year. Fiscal 2023 reflects the forecast as of November 2022, with Fiscal 2024 reflecting budgeted levels by the end of the year.

The largest spending increase are for Indirect operational and administration, increased Fiscal 2019 to Fiscal 2024 budget, 425 to 511. Over 5 years, a 20.2% increase in administrative managers from levels which are already taking financial resources, reducing the amount available for their grass-roots operational crews.

Why would a ferry service in dire straits financially, which doesn't have suitable vessels or crew to provide traditional levels of service, focus on increasing head office staff?

On January 12, 2023 Global TV titled: **BC Ferries has more senior managers than vessels in its fleet.**

It was reported: *As BC Ferries continues to grapple with a labour shortage on the waters, new numbers show the company has had no trouble filling the ranks of its corporate offices.*

*The company, which is publicly owned but privately managed, operates a fleet of 39 vessels, but employs 51 shore-based executive directors and directors, it confirmed. It also employs 18 superintendents, 207 managers and eight executives.*

*Eric McNeely, president of the B.C. Ferry and Marine Workers Union, said the numbers are outrageous considering the company continues to struggle to staff its vessels. "It's pretty hard to maintain vessels that are 40 plus years old without the staff and the resources to do it," he said. "It's pretty hard to sail the same vessels without the staff to do it."<sup>2</sup>*

It would appear that the Union's priorities align with rural coastal community priorities – adequate staff and vessels to operate a reliable, affordable, safe ferry service.

## ii. Crew Accommodation:

<sup>2</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/9407748/bc-ferries-management-executives/>



In 4.1.d of the BCF Supplemental PT 6 report: *"The high cost of living in many coastal communities, combined with limited public transportation, makes working in those communities less desirable than employers operating in urban centres well-served by public transit."*

Although the report identifies the problem, it does not offer any resolution. Surely the entire Minor Route fleet wants to hear how this situation is being addressed. Affordability and access to accommodation are core to the delivery of coastal community ferry service. Only the major fleet would be described as having terminals in "urban areas". What about the minor routes?

In their supplemental submission, BC Ferries declares their goal is to become an "employer of choice". **On these Islands, "employers of choice" provide staff accommodation if employees come from off island.**

B.C. Ferries is having challenges finding crew accommodations on both Hornby and Denman Islands. Are these the only two islands affected by the housing shortage? This is not mentioned at all in either the PT 6 report, or the Supplemental.

Historically, BC Ferries maintained "crew trailers" on both Hornby and Denman Islands. The B.C.Ferries Hornby accommodation was closed down several years ago, and the Spring of 2023 is seeing the Denman "Tin Town" crew facility being closed down.

On our Islands, there are three factors of importance regarding housing off-island crew:

- i. Buckley Bay is little more than a gas station and a ferry terminal. There is not any area of residential density within half an hour of that terminal. In fact, a lot of the off-island crews for Denman and Hornby seem to come from southern Vancouver Island.
- ii. Access to Hornby and Denman is via the ferry. For the work force, crews need to live on the Islands, or find temporary accommodation while they work on the Islands. Rental accommodation on Hornby and Denman can be extremely difficult to find.
- iii. If there is no ferry crew accommodation, there will be no crew, and ferry service will get cancelled. Lack of ferry service could be a life or death situation in a medical emergency. The ferry is our lifeline, our marine highway. Our community does not take a ferry cancellation lightly. That medical emergency call-out could be our mother, our daughter, or our best friend.....you get the idea, It's personal.

Traditionally on Hornby, there aren't enough local people to do the jobs. Finding sufficient crew is reliant on off-island people doing the job. So, everybody helps find crewing accommodation. The ship's crew offer rental suggestions, BCF advertises for housing contractors, and community members come forward. Current demand

and supply pressures mean that finding accommodation for the whole year is problematic.

On Denman, vacation rentals are illegal, there are no commercial resorts, no campgrounds, no apartment rentals, and there are hardly any BnB's. The clearest explanation on the limitations for options for off-island crew accommodation is the fact that Tin Town even exists. If Tin Town disappears there will be problem in crewing the Baynes Sound Connector. If the Baynes Sound Connector doesn't run, it effectively cuts off both Hornby and Denman Island residents from their access to critical Vancouver Island services. And vice versa. Nothing moves on, nothing moves off.

### iii. Workforce development

It would be heartening to know that BCF has been working closely with the Marine Workers Union, and staff/crew who work on the ferries to address a culture of inclusion and teamwork.

## 3. Call to action- Year round, serviceable ferries for Routes 21 and 22.

### a. A picture is worth a thousand words:



Pic.: Summer, 2022 safety scenario. Hornby Island's main road, speed limit 60 km/hour. Ferry traffic lined up, ferry traffic unloading, and a truck-pulling-a-boat driving around the line-up trying to get to the Islands only boat ramp.

Safety is a grave concern with ferry traffic, on both sides of the Hornby ferry (Gravelly Bay and Shingle Spit) using one of the lanes of the narrow, two lane main road as a marshalling area (effectively turning the lane into a parking lot, with two-way moving traffic pushed into one lane).



The video at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VOG\\_0xQHdM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VOG_0xQHdM), taken by a Denman resident, driving to his house which is on the main road down past the Gravelly Bay ferry terminal (the terminal for travel from Denman to Hornby). The video was taken in June 2019, not even the hottest months, which are July and August.



Route 22, Winter of 2022 overloads. Gravelly Bay terminal.  
All traffic behind the truck will be left behind due to volume of traffic, and the commercial traffic weight restrictions recently imposed on the Kahloke.





M.L.A. Josie Osborne presented with a 2700 name petition, and 54 pages of human impact stories, for improved service on Routes 21 and 22. Representatives from Hornby & Denman Island Trust, Comox Valley Regional Director Area A, Hornby Island Residents & Ratepayers Association, Hornby Medical Clinic, Hornby Island Community Economic Enhancement Corporation, and the Hornby Denman Ferry Advisory Committee.  
Sept. 29, 2022, Hornby Community Hall

### c. Summary

One has to acknowledge that BC Ferries had a difficult task when compiling their submission. There are many moving parts, from Covid, to inflation, to the number of routes, to supply chain and staffing challenges. Crewing has come to the forefront as a major challenge. In the end, the goal is still to provide affordable, reliable, safe ferry transportation to coastal British Columbia. For our two routes, we ask the Commission to allow BC Ferries funding to provide the expected level of service to our Islands. Specifically:

**For Route 22:** There is broad agreement that this run needs a more serviceable ferry. Both to recover from the November, 2021 reduced carrying capacity of the current 49 year old ferry, the Kahloke, but also to meet pent up demand. BC Ferries PT 6 submission showing a current

schedule for a new vessel in Fiscal 2034 is woefully inadequate and the timeline should be significantly accelerated to these levels:

**Near-Term, during Performance Term 5:** Deploy the Quinitsa for year-round service. Add flagging service in peak period.

**Medium-Term, during Performance Term 6:** As the Quinitsa ages out, deploy a vessel with equivalent, or better, capacity, such as one of the new 47 AEQ Island Class ferries.

**For Route 21:** There can be no discussion without acknowledging the ‘sunk cost fallacy’. The application of a cable ferry, in coastal and tidal waters has proven to be unsuccessful. When considering how to move forward there are 5 key points that need to be met in any evaluation of ferry service delivery, not just in B.C., but globally. There are international comparisons and standards.

**The five units of measure cannot be favoured one over the others. There are solutions that meet all five.**

1. Cost – environmental, operational, capital
2. Reliability & interoperability
3. Speed & flexibility
4. Weather capability
5. Capacity – current and forecast

**Near-term, PT 5:** Summer of 2023 supplement peak season with the Kahloke.

**Medium-term, PT 6:** Do not sink more money into the Baynes Sound Connector. It is a failed experiment. Commission a new ferry to be built to replace the BSC with a interoperable ferry with 90 AEQ.

**We again respectfully request that the Commissioner directs BCF to redo their PT 6 submission, as it relates to Routes 21 and 22, to immediately, and effectively, address local concerns and deploy vessels capable of delivering a level of service expected from a global, premier ferry service provider.**

## APPENDIX – So Say the Ferryman

### Passion, Pride, Professionalism

Spring 2023 Article in the Comox Valley Collective  
Reprinted prior to publication, with permission



# SO SAY THE FERRYMEN

REFLECTIONS ON THREE CAREERS ON THE WATER WITH BC FERRIES.

To call Hornby Island “ferry dependent” is not just a figure of speech. If you live on this idyllic Gulf Island, or if you’re visiting, you need to take two ferries each way. Three, if you’re travelling from or to the mainland. No wonder Hornbyites talk so much about the ferries!

The people who staff the island boats hold an almost mythic role: safely taking people back and forth between the shores of Hornby and the big world “on the other side.” I spoke to three retired Hornby Island ferry workers about their lives on the water.

HARRY FEARMAN  
DECKHAND AND CAPTAIN (1975 – 2013)

*Why did you choose to work for the ferries?*

I worked on tugboats for 10 years. In my mid-20s I noticed that on the tugboats, a lot of the guys were on their second and third marriages. I realized that if I wanted a more stable life, I should try something else. I came to Hornby, talked to the senior captain, and four days later I was working.

*What did you love about the job?*

Working one week on, one week off was terrific. It was better than terrific. We have a farm. And I had kids. There was a never-ending amount of stuff for me to do at home. Also, I got to go and do other boating stuff. I had nautical experience from all over the BC coast, so for instance I got to go up north and start a new ferry run between Port Hardy and Klenmu.

*What insight did working on the ferries give you into island communities?*

Working on the ferry became a big part of my social life. My co-workers became my friends, and also there were travellers going back and forth. They’d ask us how we’re doing and would be actually interested. People still know me—there are people saying hi to me all the time and I don’t necessarily have a clue who they are!

*What’s one wish you have for island transportation?*

I wish BC Ferries was more ferry-oriented. With the last two CEOs, one was an engineer and one was an airport guy.

PETE KIMMERLY  
SENIOR MASTER (1992 – 2007)

*Why did you choose to work on the ferries?*

I used to be the senior master of the fleet for Gulf Oil up in the Arctic. I was in charge of 28 ships and I was master of the *Terry Fox*, which is arguably the best icebreaker in Canada. But then the fleet was sold. I needed a job, and I went to BC Ferries. With my level of experience, they gave me a clearance for almost every ship, so I got to work all around the coast. I looked around and saw that Hornby was the best place to work, because it’s a 12-hour shift. So you work 84 hours a week, and then you get a week off.

*What did you love about the job?*

The job is what you make it, and so I made it into a very, very interesting job. I was used to running a ship in the Arctic for 16 weeks straight and keeping the crew motivated the whole time. That’s a talent I developed and that I brought to Hornby. I set out to make the Hornby ferry into a very pleasant workspace. We ended up with zero absenteeism, when people were complaining about 12 per cent absenteeism on other runs.

Also, we did all kinds of ship moves all over the coast. When you do a ship move, you work for 50 hours straight. We were the only operation on the coast willing to do that. I had a saying, “If it’s impossible, it will just take us a little longer.” And “if you want something weird done, call Hornby because we do weird.”

*What insight did working on the ferries give you into island communities?*

Every single island community is hugely different. They’ve all got their own personality. I worked them all. Some islands are into agriculture. Some are into ... Well, in Alert Bay we used to go target shooting at the rifle range. You wouldn’t think of doing that on Hornby. On Hornby everyone plants flowers.

*What’s one wish you have for island transportation?*

A bigger ferry for Hornby.

GARY LAW  
BRIDGE WATCHMAN, DECKHAND,  
NIGHT WATCHMAN (1992 – 2017)

*Why did you choose to work for the ferries?*

I felt it was a good fit—and as it turned out, it was. I had marine experience and I’ve always been a people person. This job combined the two and worked out great.

*What did you love about the job?*

The way the ferry is literally on my lifeline. If you look around your home right now [on Denman or Hornby Island], everything you see came on that little ferry.

We brought home newborns, we transported those who had passed [away] off the island, and everything in between. We did emergency runs in the dark night. And we’d see the number of folks returning each summer like swallows, from as far away as Toronto. So it was a very rich experience. It was an honour to be part of it.

*What insight did working on the ferries give you into island communities?*

What islanders have in common is our ability to do well under adversity. It brings out the best in us. We jump into the fray.

And there’s our self-sufficiency. Our ability to operate independently and rely on our own wits is vital. We can’t just call on people to do everything for us, like we would in a city. Our independence is what makes us thrive. I think this separates us from people who don’t live on a small Gulf Island.

*What’s one wish you have for island transportation?*

A seamless ferry/bus/ferry/bus service starting at Buckley Bay to move residents and visitors alike to the outer island and back.

WORDS BY LAURA BUSHEIKIN  
PHOTO BY JENNIFER ARMSTRONG