

# Kootenay Lake Ferry Strike Impacts - Survey Report for Balfour Area

Submitted March 1, 2025 by RDCK Area E Representative

---

The BCGEU ferry workers went on strike November 3, 2025, reducing the ferry sailings for the Kootenay Lake ferry, and as of March 1, 2025, the strike is still ongoing. A survey was created to recognize the impacts of the strike on residents in the Balfour area, specific to the Kootenay Lake Ferry and its reduced sailings. The survey was open to submissions February 16, 2025 until February 26, 2025, and brought in 227 respondents. The respondents were from the East Shore (52%), Harrop-Procter (17%), Balfour (14%), North Shore (6%), Nelson area (5%), Kaslo area (4%), Ainsworth (2%). The data below shows that there were significant negative impacts to date, and concerns if the strike continues. The hard survey data speaks to the health, safety and welfare impacts and is outlined below, supported with comments from residents.

## IMPACTS

The BCGEU strike action reduced the number of ferry sailings and made accessing the ferry when required very challenging. This action resulted in 93.4% of the respondents noting that their health, safety or welfare (economics) were impacted. 6.6% noted that they were not impacted by the strike in any of these three ways.

- 77.5% experienced **health** impacts: mental health, medical appointments, social events, activities and more.
- 71.8% experienced **safety** impacts: driving over the pass or other accessibility.
- 48.9% experienced **welfare** impacts: economic loss, sales, salary, income and more.

## HEALTH

Of the 77.5% who noted that their health was impacted the largest percentage at 72.6% was mental stress (a feeling of emotional strain and pressure). 10.2% stated that their health was not impacted by the strike. The other health impacts, in order of highest to lowest percentages were:

- 57.1% were unable to attend personal, family, or social needs
- 42.9% were unable to meet obligations to other people
- 35.5% were unable to get to medical appointments
- 31.4% were unable to attend physical and social events
- 4% were unable to attend their place of worship

## SAFETY

With the ferry not operating on its regular schedule people were having to drive over Kootenay Pass in the winter. The trip can be treacherous at times, the pass can sometimes be closed, and the trip makes for a much longer, costly commute. 71.3% of the respondents noted having their

# Kootenay Lake Ferry Strike Impacts - Survey Report for Balfour Area

Submitted March 1, 2025 by RDCK Area E Representative

---

safety impacted having to go over the Pass. 66.8% had driving concerns for their friends, family and themselves. 32.7% had driving concerns for business. 9.9% stated that their safety was not impacted by the Kootenay Lake ferry strike.

## WELFARE

The BCGEU strike action reduced ferry sailings which resulted in the economics of some residents being impacted. 23.3% of respondents were not economically impacted by the strike.

- 39.1% had a loss in income, salary, sales, etc
- 27.2% were unable to get to and from work reliably
- 17.3% were unable to deliver their products reliably
- 15.8% had suppliers unable to deliver their products reliably
- 10.9% had employees who were unable to get to work reliably

168 respondents provided their personal economic impacts (wages, salary, income) since November 3, 2025. With a small number of respondents, in relation to the overall population of the Balfour area, completing the survey, it still adds up to a large amount of lost income, at approximately \$1.14 million. 38 respondents were personally not economically impacted.

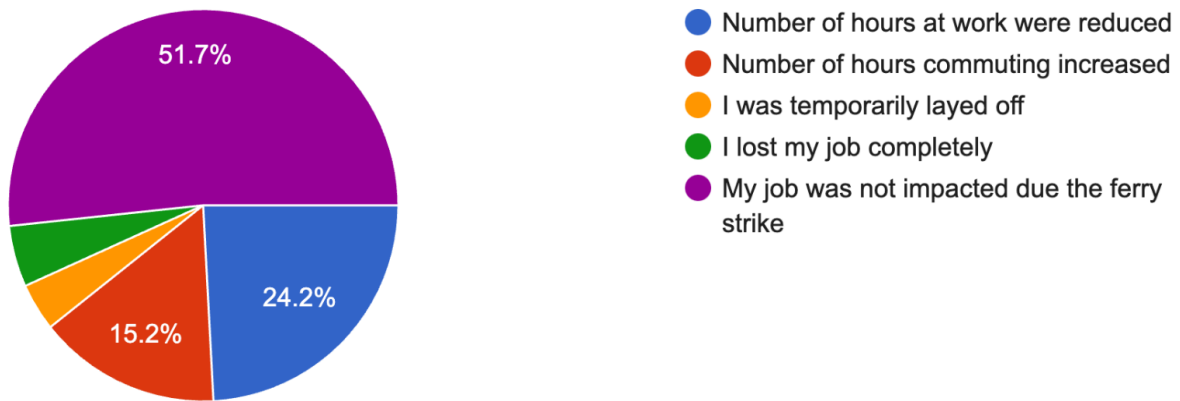
- 39 under \$1000
- 28 - \$1000-\$3000
- 18 - \$3000-\$5000
- 23 - \$5000-10,000
- 13 - \$10,000-\$20,000
- 3 - \$20,000-\$30,000
- 1 - \$30,000-\$50,000
- 1 - \$50,000-\$80,000
- 1 - \$80,000-\$100,000
- 3 - over \$100,000

The ferry strike impacted peoples jobs and their economic livelihoods in various ways. 5.1% lost their jobs completely and 3.9% were layed off. Hours commuting increased by 15.2% and 24.2% had reduced work hours. 51.7% personal economicas were not impacted.

# Kootenay Lake Ferry Strike Impacts - Survey Report for Balfour Area

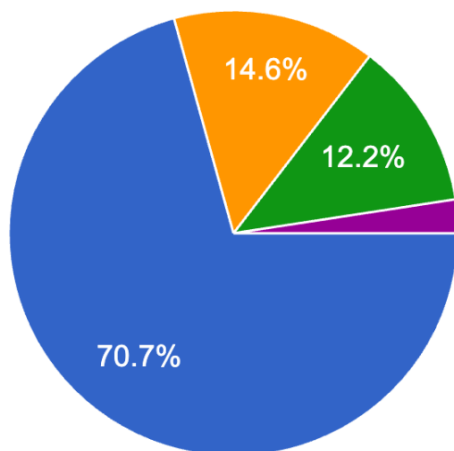
Submitted March 1, 2025 by RDCK Area E Representative

---



33 respondents noted that they operated businesses in the Balfour area, providing jobs for approximately 220 employees. The business sectors are broad, covering all ages and livelihoods, from property maintenance to transportation. The percentages are as follows:

- 12.2% service (property maintenance)
- 9.8% retail
- 9.8% construction
- 9.8% tourism
- 9.8% sales
- 7.3% food & beverage
- 7.3% arts
- 2.4% transportation
- 31.6% noted "other" as their sector



Sales were impacted by the BCGEU ferry strike, and 70.7% experienced a reduction in sales, 14.6% sales were the same, 12.2% temporarily closed their business, and 2.4% permanently closed their business. No one reported seeing an increase in sales.

# Kootenay Lake Ferry Strike Impacts - Survey Report for Balfour Area

Submitted March 1, 2025 by RDCK Area E Representative

---

The amount of lost sales by the respondents since November 3, 2025 (total over the past three months - November, December and January) was approximately \$665,000, and 86.1% of respondents had a decrease in sales as follows:

- 41.7% experienced a decrease of 10-30%
- 19.4% experienced a decrease of 40-60%
- 25% experienced a decrease of 70-100%
- 2.8% did not see a change in sales
- 5.6% temporarily closed due to the strike
- 5.5% do not know their percentage of lost sales

Respondents were asked what percentage of loss they anticipated if the strike were to continue for another three months. The majority of respondents anticipate a loss, varying between 30% to 100%.

The amount of lost sales over the next three months is anticipated at over \$1.07 million with the majority between \$3000 - \$20,000, followed closely by \$30,000 - \$50,000 and some over \$100,000.

## COMMENTS

An open-ended question was asked to further understand the healthy, safety and welfare impacts from the BCGEU ferry workers strike action. 100 respondents submitted statements and stories. Here are some of the comments, focussing on repeated phrases, submitted by the respondents:

*Travel to Nelson and Trail for medical appointments (cancer treatments to dialysis) is complicated and timely.*

*I can't work. It is extremely stressful when there's no guarantee that I can get home to my animals. Our community has been devastated.*

*The strike has put a massive strain on our community. It is heartbreaking to hear the stories of businesses going under, people not able to get to medical appointments, etc...This needs to end...People are taking dangerous risks having to do the pass in the middle of winter and sometimes the pass is closed so we are literally trapped in our community....The ferry is our highway and our highway is shut down and this is unacceptable. The government needs to step in.*

# Kootenay Lake Ferry Strike Impacts - Survey Report for Balfour Area

Submitted March 1, 2025 by RDCK Area E Representative

---

*My financial situation does not allow me to spend the night in a hotel when the last ferry sailing is full or too early to meet my appointments.*

*Our family income, bills cant get paid, and our credit card is racking up. It has put a strain on our family and mental health.*

*The alternate to the ferry is the high-risk travel over the pass which causes me stress when trying to get to a medical appointment. I have to plan for a 12+ hour travel day and pay for someone to care for my animals while I am away.*

*With a 50% cut in our income it is making it difficult to feed the family. We may have to sell our house and find alternative housing which is difficult for a family of 6. It has also lowered our property value.*

*Children are unable to attend gymnastics, trumpet lessons, skiing, and swimming in Nelson and it is affecting their mental health.*

*It has put unnecessary hardship and stress on all of the residents.*

*Relationships are being greatly impacted when we can't visit each other across the lake.*

*We have had to take the pass a few times because we could not get on the ferry to go to a medical appointment. And then the pass was closed due to avalanche control for many hours. It has caused our family much undue stress. The list of how we are affected daily goes on.*

*We were unable to support our family in a time of crisis and provide the needed care and attention.*

*The strike has caused a rift in our communities that will last long past this strike being settled.*

*It is too stressful to drive the pass being elderly.*

*I am pregnant. Getting to see my obgyn and ultrasound appointments has been a nightmare and even missed two appointments. It is stressing us all out.*

# Kootenay Lake Ferry Strike Impacts - Survey Report for Balfour Area

Submitted March 1, 2025 by RDCK Area E Representative

---

*Travel is very limiting on weekends, early morning and night ferry. No socializing with friends. No in-person meetings. Isolation.*

*Work days are now 11 hours long because of the ferry strike and added travel. I am mentally and physically exhausted.*

*I am having to move. I cannot stay here without a job now, and I couldn't get to my place of employment reliably.*

*It's the only highway in or out of here. It's a highway and should not be blocked! I can not easily attend to personal needs on the other side of Kootenay Lake and further away.*

*We are unable to continue residing in our home of many years without the access to the services, medical, employment and needed resources.*

*The entire Kootenay Lake region is impacted by the strike, whether they use the ferry or not. We are considering closing our business and relocating. Balfour is not the only community affected.*

*We have been completely disregarded by our government.*

*Kootenay Pass is not only not as safe a route, but more timely and costly with need for more gas and wear and tear on the tires.*

*We had no ferry, no pass and even the route thru Galena Bay was not an option due to weather in Roger's Pass.*

*We are an aging couple who had planned to sell our property but now it's become devalued because of the ferry strike action. This affects our health, welfare and future.*