

Island residents just want equality

Times Colonist

Thursday, June 07, 2007

I read Iain Hunter's ramblings about Gulf Islanders protesting ever-increasing ferry fares. He feels that it is not the responsibility of all B.C. taxpayers to contribute to an affordable ferry system. Instead, he supports a user-pay concept.

I wonder how he would react to toll bridges on every road where he lives to pay for the construction and maintenance of the roads?

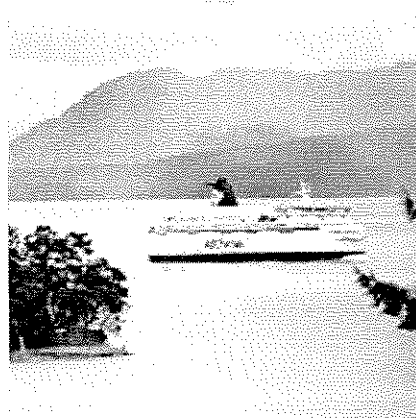
Many say that people who choose to live in the Gulf Islands should pay all ferry costs through their fares, with no subsidies.

Yet those who choose to live in other areas do not pay for the upkeep of their local highways. Instead, all the taxpayers of B.C. contribute to the maintenance of all of the roads. The taxes I pay while living on Mayne Island go toward roads that I never use.

And so it should be.

Peter Sara,

Mayne Island.



CREDIT: Debra Brash, Times Colonist files
Ferries and Subsidies: A B.C. Ferries vessel approaches Swartz Bay terminal. A recent column in the Times Colonist suggesting reduced subsidies on Gulf Islands runs might be the way to go has hit a raw nerve with many residents of the islands.

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Thursday » June
7 » 2007

Move to mainland no ferry solution

Times Colonist

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Re: "Can't afford ferry? Move to mainland," June 5.

The idea that ferry users should pack up and move to the mainland has a few flaws.

Where would the 755,000 occupants of Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast be housed?

And why should these people just up and move from where their families have lived perhaps for generations, or in the case of our First Nations population, many thousands of years? Why should we want to move to a large city with high crime and no sense of community?

What would happen to the island industries, such as dairy farming?

And most importantly, the savings from not taking the ferry would not make a dent in the huge cost of an overpriced, tiny house with no yard that would not fit my large family.

Almost 20 per cent of the province's residents live in places that rely on the ferries for transportation, and countless more use the ferries to visit friends or relatives.

While this may mean that most of the people of B.C. don't need the ferry, one in five people is too large a population to ignore.

Linnea K. Mulholland,

Duncan.

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Islands not just home to affluent retired

Times Colonist

Thursday, June 07, 2007

Re: "Ferry fares the price to be paid for an island idyll," June 4.

I never cease to be amazed by the image some attribute to island residents.

We are ordinary British Columbians. We represent all age groups -- granted not so many under 30, as job opportunities are limited. We earn our livings in creative ways.

Some older ones are able to enjoy their retirement years here.

We grow up, get married and raise our children, who attend local schools. We become grandparents, widowers and even, heaven forbid, might have to leave paradise due to complex health problems.

Most of our homes are ordinary, some having been here longer than B.C. Ferries has operated.

Residents of the Gulf Islands settled these lands in the mid-1800s with great self-sufficiency and independence. Our expectations don't leap to highways, bridges or even a free ferry system.

Our taxes at every level are equivalent to town dwellers and we ask for the same level of subsidy for our transportation system.

We all pay for highways never travelled, inland ferries never ridden, bridges never crossed.

We don't ask for flashy new ships; some of ours are the oldest in the fleet.

We pay our fair share and when pushed too far, we stand up and say enough is enough - stop the exorbitant ferry fare increases.

Jeanine Dodds,

Mayne Island trustee,

Islands Trust.

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Transit subsidies offer the most benefit

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B.C. Transit subsidies cannot be compared to B.C. Ferry subsidies. B.C. Transit gets cars off the road, reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and air pollution. This benefits everyone.

These subsidies can be considered an investment in the public good.

B.C. Ferry subsidies primarily benefit Gulf Island tourism operators and the people who have made a lifestyle choice to live there.

I'm not clear what benefit society derives from subsidizing a quality of life for wealthy people who choose to live where it is more difficult and expensive to provide public services.

John Nicol,

Victoria.

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Ferry double standard

Times Colonist

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There are about 14 different inland ferries operated under private contract with the Ministry of Transportation. They are regarded as an extension of the highway system and are all free of charge.

How does our government rationalize operating inland ferries as part of the highway system, but not the ferries connecting Island highways to the mainland?

Bob Reimer,

Victoria.

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High ferry fares hard on seniors

Times Colonist

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What some people seem to forget about escalating ferry fares is that many islanders are retired people on fixed incomes.

They moved to the islands years ago when fares were far lower.

Jill Evans,

Saltspring Island.

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