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BC's economy depends on building five new major vessels

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From the goods that stock our shelves and the visitors who sustain our tourism industry to the workers who keep our communities running, British Columbia depends on BC Ferries as a critical transportation link. Without reliable ferry service, our economy and quality of life suffer.

Today, we are at a crossroads. With a growing population, an aging fleet and increasing demand, the decisions made now will determine whether BC Ferries can provide the level of service that businesses, communities, and residents need. That's why we, representing 17 industry-leading organizations in BC's trade, tourism, and transportation sectors, are calling for an investment today in building five new major vessels that will protect our future.

BC Ferries transports tens of millions of passengers and vehicles each year. They are already struggling to meet rising demand because they're running a system with the same capacity it had 30 years ago, and mechanical issues are becoming all too frequent as the largest vessels are being used beyond their intended lifespan. The British Columbia Trucking Association estimates that ferry cancellations, breakdowns, and delays already cost the commercial transport sector upwards of \$100 million per year—costs that ultimately get passed on to consumers. If these issues worsen, it's the people and businesses of our province that will bear the brunt.

This is why long-term investment is needed now. With five new vessels, BC Ferries would have over 50% more capacity for passengers and 24% more for vehicles than the ships they are replacing—a significant upgrade we can't afford to delay. Put simply, we don't just need new ships to solve today's problems—we need more capacity to be ready for the demands that will come with our growing population and economy.

A recent study by InterVISTAS determined that BC Ferries' plan to introduce five new major vessels would support 1,350 jobs in British Columbia, generating \$87 million in wages and contributing \$140 million to the economy. It would also create 785 more local jobs to operate and maintain the fleet while allowing for \$240 million in additional cargo to be transported annually by 2035. Tourism—an industry that depends on reliable ferry service—stands to gain an estimated \$45 million in new revenue and over 560 new jobs in 2035 alone.



We have seen the cost of short-term thinking before—large infrastructure projects that are delayed only become more expensive over time. Shipbuilding costs have already risen by 40% in the last four years, and with the economic and geopolitical instability on the horizon, building five vessels now is both a prudent financial decision and a responsible investment because it secures capacity for the future and delivers best value for taxpayers.

We know that ultimately the BC Ferries Commissioner must decide whether to approve this plan. For us, the choice is clear—either make the investment in all five vessels now, ensuring reliability, affordability, and economic growth for decades to come, or choose to delay and risk increasing costs and worsening service in the long run. Our businesses, our communities and our economies up and down the coast depend on BC Ferries. Let's make the right decision.

Submitted on behalf of:

- The Association of British Columbia Marine Industries - Alex Reuben, Executive Director
- BC Chamber of Commerce - Fiona Famulak, CEO
- BC Hotel Association - Paul Hawes, President & CEO
- BC Trucking Association - Dave Earl, President & CEO
- BC Restaurant and Foodservices Association - Ian Tostenson, President & CEO
- The Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce - Bruce Williams, CEO
- 4VI - Brian Cant, President
- Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC) - Walt Judas, CEO
- Ucluelet Chamber of Commerce - Josh Jenkins, Executive Director
- Surrey Board of Trade - Indra Bhan, Interim CEO & Chief Operating Officer
- Tofino Chamber of Commerce - Samantha Hackett, Executive Director
- Sunshine Coast Tourism - Annie Wise, Executive Director
- Duncan Cowichan Chamber of Commerce - Sonja Nagel, Executive Director
- Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce - Roberta Bowman, Executive Director
- Comox Valley Chamber - Tracey Clarke, Executive Director
- Sooke Chamber of Commerce - Deb Schenk, Executive Director
- The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade - David van Hemmen, Vice-President
- Campbell River & District Chamber of Commerce - Mary Ruth Snyder, Executive Director