

## **SGI Ferry Committee Update from your Mayne Island Committee Members**

April 11th 2022

### **BC FERRIES FURTHER DELAYS SALISH DEPLOYMENT TO ROUTE 5 (SGI/SWARTZ BAY) UNTIL THE FALL OF 2022**

BC Ferries (BCF) has informed our SGI Ferry Advisory Committee (FAC) that the Salish vessel we looked forward to seeing in service this spring — then postponed to the summer — is now hoped to be in service in the fall.

This very disappointing news means that we now face another chaotic spring and summer of ferry travel on Route 5 with huge increases in our SGI populations and none of the additional ferry capacity we were expecting.

Once again, we'll be dealing with delays and overloads on the Queen of Cumberland and Mayne Queen — and those delays and overloads may be exacerbated by crew shortages.

Travelling on off-peak days and at off-peak times will help mitigate some of the impacts of the heavy ferry traffic ahead. And it'll help ensure that there is space for our essential commercial service providers at peak times.

In our June 19<sup>th</sup> 2021 on-line update posted on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MayneFAC> and published in the July 2021 MayneLiner, we included a fairly extensive list of suggestions to help alleviate some of the pressures of travelling to and from Swartz Bay during peak season. We'll re-post that information on our Facebook page.

We will continue to monitor traffic, delays and overloads and will continue to advocate for our SGI ferry services. But we can't conjure up crews that don't exist. All we can do is hope that BCF's strategies to recruit them are successful.

Following is the message we recently received from BC Ferries. It reiterates some of what we've already heard about BCF's crew shortages and recruiting challenges but also provides a bit more context that explains the current very unfortunate perfect storm over which your FAC has NO control. So please direct your questions or comments to BC Ferries at [BCFerries.com](http://BCFerries.com) BCF's Facebook page at [BC Ferries](#) or via BCF's Twitter account @BCFerries.

#### **BCF's Message:**

As experienced throughout the fall and winter of 2021/22, the impact of crew shortages at BC Ferries is expected to continue through the spring and into summer. These shortages are affecting plans to deploy a Salish vessel onto Route 5.

#### **LENGTH OF DELAY**

BC Ferries is anticipating that a Salish vessel will enter service on Route 5 this fall.

#### **CAUSES OF DELAY**

Crewing challenges are having an impact on BC Ferries' ability to bring a Salish vessel into service on Route 5 because they have not been able to find enough crew for the required

positions on the larger Salish vessel just yet. They are actively recruiting to fill the vacancies.

The crewing shortages are a result of several factors including:

- Higher than expected retirements in key shipboard positions
- The impact of vaccination policies
- Difficulties recruiting international candidates due to COVID-19
- The 25-year global shortage of professional mariners

These staffing challenges are not unique to BC Ferries. Marine transportation industries around the world are experiencing similar challenges and disruptions, e.g. BC's interior ferries, Washington State Ferries, New Zealand ferries.

## THE CREWING PROCESS

Crewing is a complex, logistical task that considers the individual's qualifications and the number of skilled mariners required for the various roles onboard each vessel, as well as where the mariners live and work.

Regulations require these positions to be filled with the appropriate crew, or the vessel cannot sail:

- Large vessels require 30 to 50 crew on each shift, with two shifts daily
- Smaller vessels like those on the minor, inter-Island routes can require 5 to 10 crew, also in shifts.

Even a small number of crew that are unavailable to sail can have a significant impact on service if replacements are challenging to find.

## WHAT IS BEING DONE TO ADDRESS CREW SHORTAGES

BC Ferries' crewing team has been looking at relocation, retraining, and hiring options to fill the necessary roles, and remain challenged by the hiring of licensed positions to fully staff the larger Salish ferry.

The crewing team continues to work hard on filling the gaps, and are making every effort to bring a Salish into service on the route as quickly as possible.

BC Ferries is advancing several initiatives to address the shortages including:

- Investing in internal training and advancement
- Implementing a significant push on recruitment (this has been going on for several months)
- Bringing back retired employees where possible.

This is a very dynamic situation and BC Ferries will keep the community posted as plans are solidified.