



Honourable Tim Houston
Premier of Nova Scotia
1700 Granville Street
P.O. Box 726
Halifax, NS B3J 2T3

September 22, 2022

Dear Premier Houston,

Recent public comments from the Provincial government surrounding the status of the international ferry service between Maine and Nova Scotia have risen sharp concern amongst our Council and our partner organizations in the region, and we would take this opportunity to express the nature of our concern and open the door to a positive effort for a continued service.

First, we acknowledge that the contract between the Province and Bay Ferries does not include us as a party to that contract, which would put us unaware of the details. We both share an interest in having a signed and executed contract crafted in the best interest of our region and Nova Scotians, and that supports an operator. Furthermore, we are both interested in tourism growth for our region and for Nova Scotia, and we are firm in our belief that this ferry service can serve that purpose well.

The statements surrounding the potential cancellation of a contract, and/or a service left many in our region fearful of the consequences of those statements. Our Council considers these statements very powerful, but also premature, considering this as the first season of transport since the pandemic. It would appear from our perspective that the province has had a negative reaction toward the numbers of passengers in this calendar year. From our perspective, a lower count this year was completely understandable and unsurprising given the environment. We request these statements be clarified so that there is no room for misunderstanding between us.

Media statements are powerful statements, and lead tourism operators, tourists, and other interested parties in a state of confusion and may in fact harm future planning from tour operators, who plan well in advance and listen intently to the words of our provincial leaders.

Clearly, our preference would be for your department to have open and honest conversations with the provider, as they would surely have insight on a mutually beneficial adjustment. We have a great relationship with Bay Ferries, forged in mutual promotion and marketing, and working alongside each other on many initiatives designed to increase traffic and promote our beautiful province. We are therefore confident that a mutual arrangement can be sought between the province and Bay Ferries. We trust that in this conversation, you will both understand the reasons why the numbers appear discouraging to the province and seek to address them positively.



Please keep in mind that when the first ferry cancellation occurred, there was a regional scale effort to restore this service, which was led by our business leaders. A previous government made a unilateral decision to cancel the ferry service and that occurred with no consideration of the community it would impact the most. While the government reluctantly decided to restore the service, that decision harmed the service for years, and set much uncertainty in the tourism industry. This was exacerbated by COVID-19, and all the restrictions that followed, some still in place today.

If possible, we are interested in a closer relationship with your team surrounding the ferry file, seeing as any changes would have dramatic impacts on our region, and to tourism operators all over Nova Scotia. While we cannot be a party to a contract, we are offering an advisory ear to your leadership, to discuss the details surrounding this important service. We do not want to be at odds with our Provincial counterparts over a service in the media, we want to be a positive advisor to your effort, to ensure the local perspective is considered, and offer our statistics gathered as evidence to support that this subsidized service can be viable and useful to us all.

Our tourism partner, YASTA, has provided your department with some fascinating statistics on rooms sold, length of stay etc., and so we will not be repeating it here.

In summary, we believe that an ongoing commitment to the service, with local engagement at the table, is the best approach to address the issues the province faces. We are sensitive to the increasing costs of operation, which you bear. We are also ready to discuss the economic spinoffs of that investment and are confident that a reasonable go forward plan can be reached.

Sincerely,

Danny Muise
Warden

Provincial Ministers CC:

Honourable Barbara Adams
Honourable Jill Balsler
Honourable Brian Comer
Honourable Susan Corkum-Greek
Honourable Steve Craig
Honourable John Lohr

Honourable Becky Druhan
Honourable Patt Dunn
Honourable Tim Halman
Honourable Brad Johns
Honourable Colton LeBlanc
Honourable Karla MacFarlane

Honourable Allan MacMaster
Honourable Kim Masland
Honourable Greg Morrow
Honourable Tory Rushton
Honourable Michelle Thompson
Honourable Brain Wong

Municipal partners CC:

Warden John Cunningham
Chairman Calvin d'Entremont
Mayor Pam Mood