

Plea made for ferry fares



tony law

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Ferry Advisory Committee chairs are using a spike in ferry traffic this January as proof that lower crossing charges would encourage travel.

“The only month that there was a bit of a blip was in January when BC Ferries lowered the rates a little bit,” said Tony Law, chair of the Hornby/Denman ferry advisory committee.

In December and January, the provincial government allocated \$20-million to offset ferry fees — reducing the cost of travel by 33 per cent.

While the ferry advisory chairs have been tracking passenger rates that are steadily declining, Law said the reduced cost for travellers, particularly in January when weather was more encouraging, did make a difference.

“We thought it would happen,” said Law, noting that they would like to see it tried at a better time of year. “It was not a good month to test — we were hoping to see it in the spring sometime.”

Increasing ferry fares have had a negative impact on the local communities and economies that rely on minor ferry routes, said Law.

Law said the ferry committee chairs hope to meet with Minister of Transportation Shirley Bond once she's settled in her new position — and encourage the province to come up with a long-term strategy for supporting minor ferry routes in the province.

They feel the provincial government needs to make the effort, because BC Ferries is raising rates to pay for new infrastructure that the province let age too far before handing over operations to the corporation.

“It's infrastructure for essential transportation,” said Law. “This is your responsibility.”

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