

August 8, 2023



Re: Chamber of Commerce Meeting regarding the Wood Islands Ferry Service

In attendance: Blair Aitken - President EPEICC, Wayne Benson, Councillor Katherine Bryson, Councillor Trisha Carter, Russell Compton, MP Eric Duncan, Alan MacPhee, Sandra Hodder - Executive Director EPEICC

Report: Trisha and I attended this meeting on behalf of RMB to discuss the on-going ferry issue and voice our concerns. Trisha, Alan and I discussed how the unreliable ferry service is affecting rural small businesses. Discussions evolved to the economic impact this has on Eastern PEI, the Atlantic region and beyond. It was agreed that the economic impact to businesses and tourism is immense. As well, the reputation and unreliability of the ferry is continuing to have an impact on our region despite having a two-service ferry once again running. Apart from the obvious economic impact, the safety and continuity aspects were also discussed. It was agreed by all that the ferry is an essential service, part of the Trans Canada Highway, and that a timely solution is required.

Solutions and next steps were discussed:

- 1) It was agreed that second-hand ferries are required for the interim, until a new ferry is built, and that there are options currently available in Europe for purchase. It would be Transport Canada's responsibility to acquire these ferries.
- 2) Pressure needs to be put on Transport Canada for a timely solution. With this in mind the follow must occur:
 - a. The Chamber will request copies of the appropriate documents regarding the ferry service from Transport Canada; and
 - b. An economic impact study will be completed.
- 3) A request from the official opposition will call for a hearing on the ferry service by the Federal Transport Committee.
- 4) An information-based marketing campaign will be created to keep this issue '*front and centre*' - it is possible the Chamber may seek funding from the municipality for this campaign.

It was reiterated that the Rural Municipality of Belfast wants to be part of these discussions and that collaboration from the business community and all levels of government is required with this issue.

We thank the Honorable Eric Duncan for travelling to PEI and meeting with us to discuss this important issue and thank the Chamber of Commerce for facilitating this meeting.

Signature on File

Councillor - Katherine Bryson
Rural Municipality of Belfast

Signature on File

Councillor - Trisha Carter
Rural Municipality of Belfast