



June 1, 2020

The Honourable Marc Garneau, PC, MP  
Minister, Transport Canada  
330 Sparks Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0N5

The Honourable Bill Morneau, PC, MP  
Minister, Finance Canada  
90 Elgin Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0G5

Dear Ministers,

Ferries, in Canada, transport over 55 million passengers, 22 million vehicles and billions of dollars of goods. Our members employ – directly and indirectly – over 43,000 people.

The ferry sector has, throughout the COVID-19 crisis, provided a vital service for Canadian communities by:

- Enabling the continuous delivery of goods to remote and rural regions;
- Allowing the safe passage of first responders;
- Transporting residents for essential travel.

While ferries have traveled while nearly empty, the transport of ferry users and cargo throughout the pandemic has never been more valuable.

Ferry services are at the heart of public interest. While services have continued during this difficult period it has come with significant financial hardship. Our members have seen revenues decrease (by 80% in some cases) while costs (fuel, maintenance, labour and payments on ships) remain the same.

While the ferry sector is prepared to weather economic downturns – and has done so in the past – it cannot be expected to absorb the financial setbacks which have occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ferry sector is regulated by the Government of Canada and, as such, the government has a some responsibility for its continued operations. Indeed, as of April 6, 2020, the government asked the ferry sector to take health and safety measures which resulted, in most cases, in reducing the maximum number of passengers allowed per ship.



We are asking for the government to support the sector by:

- **Changing the eligibility criteria for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy program** to cover provincial and municipal Crown corporations, agencies and entities. This would enable these organizations, who depend on the fees paid by users, to see some compensation;
- **Provide flexibility in how the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy program is administered.** Some ferry operators have had no revenues in the period of March to mid to late-June 2019 and therefore can't qualify for the wage subsidy program. This lack of revenues is attributed to the floods of 2019 in Eastern Canada – we can't penalize these operators for being victims of two disasters instead of just one;
- **Develop a program to support the ferry sector in Canada.** We are asking for the government to cover a portion of the revenue lost by the ferry sector in order to enable it to weather this storm. The sector would like to see \$155 million to be provided to the sector. It represents a portion of the \$453.75 million losses that the sector estimates it has and will incur from March 15 to August 31, 2020.

A federal government initiative for the ferry sector would provide help to vital transportation systems in rural and urban regions.

Ministers, we understand that the federal government cannot compensate all sectors for all revenues lost. The issue here is that ferries are regulated by the federal government and provide essential transport services to millions of Canadians – and they will be an essential part of Canada's recovery.

We look forward to your response.

Yours truly,

Serge A. Buy  
Chief Executive Officer