



WRITTEN QUESTIONS FORM
2nd Session, 65th General Assembly
Legislative Assembly of PEI

emcl
K1-09-17

Question number: 1489	Question date: May 12, 2017
Question asked by: Darlene Compton MLA for District 4: Belfast - Murray River	
Question asked of (department): Premier's Office	
Question answered by (Minister): Hon. Wade MacLauchlan	Date received by Clerk's Office: Office Use Only

QUESTION: Please table a copy of all correspondence with the Government of Canada and its affiliated bodies regarding the Wood Islands Ferry between February 23rd, 2015 and present.

ANSWER: The Wood Island-Caribou ferry is a critical transportation and economic link between the Island and the mainland, transporting goods to markets, and Islanders and tourists to destinations. Our government immediately identified continued ferry service as a priority. The interprovincial ferries are a federal responsibility – and we will continue to make the importance of the ferry service clear to our federal partners. Numerous meetings and phone calls took place between federal and provincial officials following the mechanical issues last summer. Additionally, we formed a Prince Edward Island Task Force to consult with Islanders and identify the ferry service's importance to the provincial economy. We were encouraged when the federal government announced an RFP process for long term ferry service on May 5th 2017.

Within 24 hours of the announcement regarding MV Holiday Island mechanical issues:

- Minister Biggar call with Minister MacAulay
- Minister MacDonald call to Minister MacAulay's office
- Minister MacAulay and the Premier met on a number of occasions
- Premier's Office in contact with Transport Canada
- Premier's Office in contact with Minister MacAulay's office
- Premier's Office in contact with Minister MacAulay's office about use of the Earl Windsor, formally known as Prince Edward ferry
- Meeting with Minister Garneau (at airport)
- Calls to Newfoundland to secure a second boat
- Meeting with Premier, Premier Ball and officials
- Premier, Minister MacAulay met with Prime Minister
- Minister Biggar call with Marc Garneau
- Minister Biggar letter to MLA Darlene Compton
- Minister MacDonald letter to Minister Garneau
- Premier met with the Prime Minister in the fall of 2016



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July 12, 2016

Honourable Marc Garneau MP
Minister of Transport
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Garneau:

As you are well aware, the MV Holiday Island - one of two ferries operating between Wood Islands, Prince Edward Island and Caribou, Nova Scotia, is out of service as during dry dock additional steel work was found to be required. As a result, the crossing, which normally has 2 vessels operating during the critical summer tourism months is now operating with one vessel.

Northumberland Ferries Ltd. have made adjustments, adding a crossing, encouraging travelers to reserve ahead, and shifting commercial traffic to non-peak times. These measures, while helpful, have not resolved the issue. The loss of a minimum of three crossings per day cannot be managed away. Commercial vehicle operators are reporting waiting for hours as preference is given to tourist traffic or the vessel is simply at capacity. From a tourism perspective, tourist operators are reporting occupancy numbers that are down substantially from last year. This can be attributed directly to ferry access given that visitation numbers year to date for the Island are up over last year.

As you can appreciate, quick resolution to this situation is critical. My office will be reaching out to your office to schedule a call. Any update you can provide on efforts to resolve this situation is appreciated.

Thank you and I look forward to your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

J. Heath MacDonald
Minister of Economic Development and Tourism



Transportation,
Infrastructure
and Energy

Transports,
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September 16, 2016

Darlene Compton, MLA
Opposition Member's Office
P.O. Box 338,
Charlottetown, PE C1A 7K7

Dear Ms. Compton:

I would like to thank you for your letter regarding ferry service between Wood Islands and Caribou. Please excuse the lateness of this reply, but be assured that I am both aware of and concerned about the ferry service to our Island.

I believe you and I share the same feelings and concerns with regard to this vital service. This ferry service is vital to the economies and communities of King County and of Pictou County, but it has additional importance as a link between the provinces of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

During the last summer, mechanical issues with these boats led to service interruptions and delays. Just as seriously, this situation created uncertainty for the traveling public.

I have been in contact with both our Island Members of Parliament and with federal Transport Minister Marc Garneau directly in order to make sure that our federal government understands the importance of the Wood Islands-Pictou ferry link. Our government is united in supporting the ferry system and in encouraging the federal government to ensure reliable financial support for this service.

The government of Prince Edward Island is committed to providing transportation service that is safe, reliable and efficient.

I applaud your support as we encourage Ottawa to evaluate its support of the ferry system upon which Islanders rely.

Sincerely,

Paula Biggar
Minister