

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a formal submission regarding ferry service and medical access on Route 55 (Lasqueti Island), directed to British Columbia Ferry Services Inc. and the Minister of Transportation and Transit.

On May 14, 2026, two Lasqueti residents made their off-island medical appointments only because two other passengers voluntarily surrendered their seats on the contracted ferry. This submission identifies the policy and contract administration gaps that forced that outcome.

- **What is asked:** Five operational requests under the Route 55 service contract:
 - (1) Adaptation of the existing BC Ferries Medical Assured Loading program to Route 55, developed jointly with the Lasqueti Community Association Ferry Committee (“LCA Ferry Committee”), Island Health, and the Judith Fisher Centre operated by the Lasqueti Last Resort Society.
 - (2) A formal schedule review for medical access alignment, producing written findings and proposed options within 90 days.
 - (3) Compliance with the semi-annual community meeting, communication and engagement obligations under the 2024 amended service contract.
 - (4) Vessel records and assessment for the MV Centurion VII, comprising (a) disclosure of inspection and maintenance records and Schedule A capacity compliance position, (b) disclosure of BC Ferries’ steps to maintain the crew configuration needed for highest available certified capacity, (c) a going-forward reporting amendment requiring Western Pacific Marine to record passengers turned away due to capacity, and (d) an independent assessment of the vessel’s adequacy to the Route 55 service mandate.
 - (5) A written commitment from BC Ferries to attend each future Schedule G semi-annual community meeting on Route 55 with delegated authority to receive community input.
- **Under what authority:** The service contract between British Columbia Ferry Services Inc. (“BC Ferries”) and Western Pacific Marine Ltd., as amended March 27, 2024 (TRA-2024-41105 being BC Ferries’ procurement file reference; agreement extended to March 31, 2028), specifically the service capacity specification under Schedule A, item (a), the inspection right under section 1.1(f), the TC correspondence obligation of Schedule G, Item 3, and the communication and engagement obligations of Schedule G, Items 4, 5, and 6. No new legislation or policy is required to respond to any of these requests.
- **At what cost:** Requests 1, 2, 3, and 5 fall within existing operational mandate and contractual obligations and require no new funding; the staff time required is bounded by the deliverables specified (adaptation of an existing program, a 90-day review producing a written output, contract compliance enforcement, and meeting attendance). Request 4 requires commissioning of an independent assessment; this cost is modest relative to the public safety and service mandate questions it addresses and falls within BC Ferries’ contract oversight responsibilities.
- **By what date:** A written response to this submission is requested by July 15, 2026 (30 business days from the date of receipt). A draft medical-priority boarding policy is requested within 60 days of the written response.

The full submission follows.

Date: June 3, 2026

From: David B., Resident, Lasqueti Island, BC

To:

Nicolas Jimenez, President and CEO, British Columbia Ferry Services Inc.

(Joy MacPhail, Board Chair, copied simultaneously)

The Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Transit

cc:

The Honourable Josie Osborne, Minister of Health

Island Health (Vancouver Island Health Authority)

Stephanie Higginson, MLA for Ladysmith-Oceanside, Parliamentary Secretary for Primary Care Access

George Anderson, MLA for Nanaimo-Lantzville, Parliamentary Secretary for Transit

Shelley Garside, Chair, Lasqueti Community Association Ferry Committee |

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Marilyn Darwin, President, Lasqueti Last Resort Society (Judith Fisher Centre) |

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Subject: Formal Submission on Ferry Service and Medical Access, Route 55 (Lasqueti Island): Five Operational Requests

I am a permanent resident of Lasqueti Island and a dependent user of Route 55, served exclusively by the MV Centurion VII under contract between British Columbia Ferry Services Inc. ("BC Ferries") and Western Pacific Marine Ltd. On Lasqueti Island, health care access and ferry service are the same policy problem. I recognize that contracted small-route service involves genuine operational constraints; each of the five requests in this submission falls within the existing mandate and available authority, and four require no new expenditure. This submission is offered in my personal capacity as a resident, parallel to the ongoing work of the Lasqueti Community Association Ferry Committee; it complements that Committee's broader advocacy rather than speaking for it. The full requests are summarized in the Executive Summary above and developed in the sections that follow.

Context

Lasqueti Island has no permanent primary care provider and no road access; every medical appointment, diagnostic procedure, and emergency transfer depends on Route 55, a contracted passenger-only ferry service operating between False Bay and French Creek. On-island health services are coordinated through the Judith Fisher Centre, operated by the Lasqueti Last Resort Society, which hosts a weekly visiting registered nurse clinic and a Telehealth facility for specialist consultations; urgent care, laboratory services, and basic diagnostic imaging are accessible at the Oceanside Urgent Care & Health Centre in Parksville, a short distance from the French Creek ferry terminal; hospital care, surgical care, advanced diagnostic imaging, and most specialist appointments

require Route 55 ferry travel to French Creek and onward travel to Nanaimo or Victoria. The route is subject to weather-related cancellations and mechanical failures that can result in multi-day service suspensions; in time-sensitive emergencies, the contracted ferry, air ambulance, and Canadian Coast Guard assets may all be simultaneously unavailable during severe or sustained weather events.

Tuesday sailings do not operate at any time of year. Wednesday sailings operate only during the ten-week peak season (last Wednesday of June to Labour Day inclusive); for the remaining approximately 42 weeks of the year, residents are without scheduled ferry service on both Tuesday and Wednesday each week. The earliest sailing departs False Bay at 8:00 a.m., arriving at French Creek at approximately 9:00 a.m., a structural barrier to morning medical appointments that has not been formally reviewed against health system appointment availability. The vessel has no accommodation for mobility-impaired passengers, a documented deficiency for a community in which, per the 2021 Census, 41 percent of permanent residents are aged 60 or older and one-third are aged 65 or older. The 2021 Census records 498 permanent residents with a median age of 54.8 years. Medical transport is a primary purpose of off-island travel for older residents.

Schedule G of the current service contract obliges the Operator to seek community input through semi-annual meetings and a published engagement plan; those obligations have not been consistently met, and BC Ferries has not exercised its inspection and oversight authority under section 1.1(f) of the service contract to enforce Schedule G compliance. No party in the contract chain is required to give weight to community input received, and no mechanism obliges the Ministry of Transportation and Transit, BC Ferries, or Western Pacific Marine to act on residents' concerns before making service decisions that directly affect medical access.

A documented incident on May 14, 2026, illustrates the operating reality on this route. On that date, the 8:00 a.m. departure from False Bay was at certified capacity. Two passengers arrived at the dock requiring travel for medical appointments. Two passengers already onboard voluntarily disembarked, giving up their seats so that both medical travellers could board and reach their appointments. There is no formal medical-priority mechanism on Route 55; medical access during capacity-constrained sailings currently depends on other passengers giving up their seats. Request 1 below addresses this gap.

Five Requests

1. Medical-Priority Boarding Policy

BC Ferries should develop and implement a medical-priority boarding policy for Route 55 in joint consultation with the LCA Ferry Committee, Island Health, and the Judith Fisher Centre. The policy should, at a minimum, specify how medical purpose is verified at the point of boarding; how priority operates during capacity-constrained sailings, including summer peak periods; and how health care providers travelling to or from the island are identified and prioritized. A draft policy for community review is requested within 60 days of the written response to this submission. This requires no new funding and can be implemented by service directive.

BC Ferries currently operates a Medical Assured Loading program network-wide for patients travelling under the Provincial Government's Travel Assistance Program with a supporting letter from a medical practitioner. The program is administered through ticket agents on bookable routes and through ticket agents or vessel crew on non-bookable routes. On Route 55, the program does not

function as designed for three structural reasons. First, the False Bay terminal has no ticket booth and no ticket agent. Second, the program guarantees boarding priority but is silent on the circumstances in which the vessel is at any of its Transport Canada certified ceilings (12 passengers under Category A, 50 under Category B, 59 under Category C). On Route 55, sailings at or near the certified ceiling occur regularly, including three Category C sailings in December 2025 alone (see Request 4 for the per-date record), and on each occasion, an MAL holder arriving at the dock would either be denied boarding or displace a passenger already onboard. Third, the MAL travel benefit is structured around “free travel for one standard vehicle up to 20 ft (6.10 m)”; the MV Centurion VII has no vehicle deck, and this component of the program is moot. The request is therefore not for a new policy but for adaptation of an existing BC Ferries program to the operating environment of a passenger-only, capacity-constrained, non-booked route. The adaptation work is properly a direct BC Ferries engagement with the LCA Ferry Committee, Island Health, and the Judith Fisher Centre, not a delegation to the operator under Schedule G; with no ticket booth at False Bay, no ticket agent, and no vehicle deck on the MV Centurion VII, the MAL program as documented in BC Ferries’ service information cannot be administered by the Operator as it is on other routes, and the operational responsibility falls to BC Ferries by default. The desired outcome of the joint development is that no MAL holder is denied boarding, and no passenger already onboard is displaced; how the operating model achieves this, through advance medical registration, protected capacity allocation, or other mechanisms, is properly determined by the joint working group rather than dictated in this submission.

2. Route 55 Schedule Review for Medical Access Alignment

BC Ferries should conduct a formal review of the Route 55 service schedule in joint consultation with Island Health, the LCA Ferry Committee, and the Judith Fisher Centre. The review should produce, within 90 days, two documented outputs: a written analysis of the alignment between current departure times and medical appointment availability, specifically addressing the year-round absence of Tuesday sailings, the additional absence of Wednesday sailings outside the ten-week peak season, the approximately 9:00 a.m. earliest arrival at French Creek, and the alignment of ferry departures with the Judith Fisher Centre’s weekly nurse clinic, including the arrival and departure travel of the visiting registered nurse from Parksville; and specific proposed schedule options for community consultation, identifying any adjustments that could improve medical access within the existing contracted service frequency. The review should also address service reliability arising from the vessel’s 35-knot wind and 2.5-metre wave operating restrictions: in calendar 2025, Western Pacific Marine’s monthly trip reports record 19 separate service-day disruptions due to wind exceedance, totalling 52 cancelled one-way sailings, with a further 9 one-way sailings lost to mechanical issues. Each disrupted service day represents cascading appointment effects for residents whose medical travel cannot be rescheduled to the same week. The operating limits are appropriate to vessel safety; the scope of the review is whether the schedule, sailing redundancy, or make-up policy can be adjusted to reduce the medical-access impact of weather and mechanical cancellations.

The review should also address the absence of accommodation for mobility-impaired passengers on the current vessel and, within the same 90-day output, propose interim measures for accessible boarding and on-board accommodation under the contracted service. Any future contract for Route 55, and any temporary substitute vessel, must specify accessible boarding and passenger accommodation for mobility-impaired travellers as a minimum contract requirement. This is an

operational scheduling and accessibility review within BC Ferries' existing mandate and requires no new capital expenditure.

3. Compliance with Schedule G Communication and Engagement Obligations

The 2024 amended service contract¹ replaced Schedule G in its entirety. The current Schedule G imposes three communication and engagement obligations that have not been met. Item 4 of the amended Schedule G states: "The Operator will schedule and conduct semi-annual open public meetings with the local community on Lasqueti Island." No meetings were held in 2025, and only one has been held in 2026. Item 5 states: "By October 1, 2024, the Operator will develop and make public a written plan that sets out how the Operator will communicate and engage with the local community on Lasqueti Island. At the end of each year of the Term, the Operator will make public a summary of the feedback it received in connection with its plan, and actions taken by the Operator in response." A draft plan was received by the local ferry committee in late May 2026, approximately twenty months overdue, and only after the community requested it again at the 2026 meeting; no annual feedback summary has been published. Item 6 states: "The Operator will make public its policies and protocols for changes in sailing times, sailing cancellations, ticket issuance and conditions of carriage." Compliance has not been confirmed to the community. BC Ferries is asked to: (a) ensure the second semi-annual meeting for 2026 is scheduled and held; (b) require Western Pacific Marine to finalize and publish the communication and engagement plan without further delay and to confirm a date for the first annual feedback summary; (c) require Western Pacific Marine to identify the published locations (URLs or document references) of the Item 6 policies on schedules, cancellations, ticketing, and carriage conditions, and to bring any unpublished policies into compliance within 30 days; and (d) engage with the Lasqueti Community Association Ferry Committee as the apparent community representative for Route 55, pending any formal designation the Committee chooses to make. These are contract compliance requests, not requests for new obligations. BC Ferries' inspection and oversight authority under section 1.1(f) of the service contract provides the basis for enforcing the Operator's Schedule G obligations; the requests above are framed as contract administration steps within BC Ferries' authority as the contracting party, not as delegations back to the Operator.

4. Vessel Records and Assessment for the MV Centurion VII

On Route 55, sailings at or near the vessel's Transport Canada certified passenger capacity occur regularly. The current Transport Canada Safety Inspection Certificate² shows three certified crew configurations: Category C (Captain, Mate, and 1 crew member; 59-passenger ceiling), Category B (Captain and 2 crew members; 50-passenger ceiling), and Category A (Captain and 1 crew member; 12-passenger ceiling). Western Pacific Marine's December 2025 monthly trip report records three sailings at or above the Category B 50-passenger ceiling in a single non-peak month: 59 passengers on December 11, 53 on December 19, and 57 on December 29; each required Category C crewing to operate legally. The 15 percent reduction in certified capacity that occurs whenever a Mate is not on board, and the further reduction to 12 passengers under Category A, are not disclosed in public service information. For context, Lasqueti Island had approximately 300 permanent residents when the MV Centurion VII entered service in 1985 (Statistics Canada 1986 Census) and 498 permanent residents per the 2021 Census; no increase in Transport Canada certified passenger capacity is on record over the same period. Schedule A, item (a) of the service contract specifies that the Service includes "the transportation of up to 60 passengers and 100 pounds of personal hand baggage for each passenger." The vessel at maximum certified crewing (Category C, 59 passengers) therefore

delivers one passenger fewer than the contracted service capacity; at Category B (50 passengers) it delivers ten passengers fewer (a 16.7 percent gap); and at Category A (12 passengers) it delivers forty-eight passengers fewer (an 80 percent gap). Transport Canada certification establishes that the vessel is safe to carry between 12 and 59 passengers, depending on crew configuration; it does not establish that any of these configurations is adequate to the Schedule A specification. The crew configuration on any given sailing is determined by Western Pacific Marine. The choice of crew configuration is therefore a contract performance question, not a Transport Canada safety question, and sits with BC Ferries as the contracting party under section 1.1(f) of the service contract.

BC Ferries' inspection authority under section 1.1(f) of the service contract¹ is contractual and independent of Transport Canada's certification regime. Section 1.1(f) requires Western Pacific Marine to provide BC Ferries with access to inspect the vessel and "all manifests, records, certificates and licenses maintained thereon," and to support such enquiries as BC Ferries "may deem necessary or desirable in order to satisfy itself as to the fulfilment of the Operator's obligations hereunder." Under Schedule G, Item 3 of the 2024 amendment, Western Pacific Marine is required to provide all Transport Canada correspondence related to the Service to BC Ferries within 3 business days of issue or receipt. BC Ferries, therefore, already holds the inspection records and Transport Canada correspondence. BC Ferries is asked to:

- (a) Disclose the inspection records, the full maintenance record, and any record of changes to certified passenger capacity since the vessel entered service in 1985. The current Transport Canada Safety Inspection Certificate (No. 2026-00042-505, valid April 28, 2026 to April 27, 2027) records two hull bottom inspections, on April 28, 2023 and May 13, 2020; confirm the date of the next scheduled hull bottom inspection.
- (b) Disclose: (i) what steps BC Ferries has taken, or will take, under section 1.1(f) to require Western Pacific Marine to maintain the crew configuration needed to operate the MV Centurion VII at the highest available certified capacity on every sailing; (ii) whether BC Ferries has assessed the gap between the Schedule A 60-passenger service specification and the vessel's certified ceilings under each crew category (12, 50, and 59 passengers), and what remediation, if any, is contemplated; and (iii) the date by which BC Ferries will report to the community on the answers to (i) and (ii).
- (c) Require Western Pacific Marine, on a going-forward basis, to expand the data captured in its monthly trip reports to include, for each scheduled sailing: (i) the operating category in effect (Transport Canada Category A, B, or C); (ii) where the sailing was cancelled or curtailed in one direction, the stated reason, formalizing the existing Missed Trip worksheet practice as a contractual reporting requirement; and (iii) the number of passengers present at the False Bay or French Creek dock at the scheduled boarding time who were not carried due to capacity, together with the date, sailing time, and (where the passenger volunteers it) the stated purpose of travel. Western Pacific Marine's current monthly trip reports record total passenger counts carried and, in a Missed Trip worksheet, capture stated reasons for cancellations; the reports do not yet capture operating category or demand exceeding capacity; absent these data, the per-sailing Schedule A compliance position cannot be verified, the actual capacity-demand gap on Route 55 cannot be evaluated, and Requests 2 and 4 of this submission rest on an evidentiary floor rather than a true measure of service shortfall. This is a reporting amendment within BC Ferries' authority as the contracting party under section 1.1(f) and adds no operational burden beyond standard dockside record-keeping.
- (d) Commission an independent assessment of the MV Centurion VII (Official Number 804881, registered to Harbour Cruises Ltd. and operated by Western Pacific Marine Ltd. under contract to BC

Ferries, built in 1985 and now in its 41st year of service) for adequacy to the Route 55 service mandate, conducted by a party with no commercial relationship to Western Pacific Marine Ltd. or its registered ownership. The assessment should evaluate fitness-for-service and capacity adequacy against the present and projected service needs of the Lasqueti Island community, including medical access requirements. To produce an actionable result, the assessment should compare the MV Centurion VII against peer passenger-only vessels currently in service on coastal British Columbia routes serving comparable populations, with parameters including accessibility provisions, weather operating envelope, certified passenger capacity relative to community size, and vessel age relative to commercial service life. This is a service-mandate question within BC Ferries' authority as the contracting party; it is not a vessel safety question, which Transport Canada certification addresses separately. The cost of an independent assessment for a passenger vessel of this size is typically in the range of \$5,000 to \$15,000 CAD.

5. BC Ferries Representation at Schedule G Semi-Annual Community Meetings

Schedule G Item 4 obligates Western Pacific Marine, as Operator, to hold semi-annual open public meetings with the local community on Lasqueti Island. The contract is silent on attendance by BC Ferries as the contracting party. At the one Schedule G meeting held in 2026, no BC Ferries representative attended. I acknowledge that this absence is not a contract breach. I request, as a matter of discretionary contract administration practice, that BC Ferries commit in writing to send a designated representative to each future Schedule G semi-annual meeting on Route 55, with delegated authority to receive community input on matters within BC Ferries' control under the service contract, including but not limited to: medical-priority boarding policy adaptation under the Medical Assured Loading framework; service schedule review under contract section 6; and inspection and certification matters under section 1.1(f) and Schedule G Item 3. The matters addressed in this submission fall within BC Ferries' authority, not the Operator's. They cannot be resolved at a meeting that BC Ferries does not attend.

¹ Service contract: Agreement between British Columbia Ferry Services Inc. and Western Pacific Marine Ltd., effective April 1, 2020, as amended by Amending Agreement dated March 27, 2024 (TRA-2024-41105), extending the term to March 31, 2028. Section 1.1(f) governs the inspection right; Schedule G (as amended) governs communication, engagement, and TC correspondence obligations.

² Transport Canada Safety Inspection Certificate No. 2026-00042-505, issued April 28, 2026, valid until April 27, 2027, signed by Capt. Aamir Alvi at Nanaimo, BC. The prior certificate (No. 2025-00058-505, expired April 28, 2026) carried identical operating limits, capacities, and hull bottom inspection dates. Available: Transport Canada Safety Inspection Certificate posted at lasqueti.ca/island-info/lasqueti_ferry. Western Pacific Marine's monthly trip reports are transmitted by the Operator to the Chair of the Lasqueti Community Association Ferry Committee.

A written response is requested within 30 business days of receipt (by July 15, 2026).

The disclosure provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, used previously by Lasqueti Island residents to obtain records concerning Route 55 procurement and contract administration, remain available if records requested in this submission are not provided voluntarily.

Respectfully submitted,

David B.
Resident, Lasqueti Island, BC
June 3, 2026