

Lennie White; wdonovan@wolfville.ca; Darlene Norman

Subject: Urgent Request from Mayor Mood :)

Good day Mayors and Wardens!

I reach out to you today in the hopes you will lend your voices to an issue that I strongly believe affects us all. That is the NS to Maine ferry. The vessel may land in Yarmouth, and we are thrilled to roll out the very best welcoming mat for our tens of thousands of visitors to Nova Scotia yearly, yet we know they don't stay here. They are visiting each of you. In the spirit of "A rising tide floats all boats..." this is a good thing! When one of us wins, we all win.

Moreso, the Province wins. We are each, as leaders, in the business of putting our hearts and souls into the grueling (and satisfying) work of building the very best communities possible, each of which adds to the growth of the Province. Folks are not coming to NS because the health care is perfect. They're not coming here because housing is plentiful. Or because education has been sorted out. They're here because they visit our communities and see the quality of life we offer and decide to make NS home. Whether it's in Lunenburg, Yarmouth, Halifax, Sydney, Wolfville, Port Hood or anywhere in between, it's the work we do, the commitment local leadership has to building communities that makes this Province what it is. I believe that and am proud and thankful to be part of that.

So I would humbly ask that each of you write, in your own words, about a) your support for the ferry b) the impact it has on your community c) the impact you know it has on the Province and d) reach out to as many businesses as you can for them to do the same. It needn't be long. It simply needs to be from the heart. We know our communities and the work we've put in.

Letters need to be sent to the Premier and to each of his MLAs. I would strongly suggest copying the leaders of the opposition as well.

Following are some (I could write 50 pages) of the dangers of no ferry that I can see without thinking to deeply:

- Over 50 million folks on the northeastern seaboard of the U.S. will not have a direct link to NS.
- Tens of thousands of people will not make their way yearly to NS
- Folks in the US will stop purchasing properties in our communities. Personally, I like and need the taxes to make things even better!
- Job losses: thousands are hired under the tourism umbrella. From fixed roof accommodations to restaurants, gas stations, shops... all of it. It's all connected.
- No jobs, folks leave. Trust me when I say that when the NDP government took away the ferry, we went into a downward spiral that has taken a decade of slugging away to get back to some semblance of hope. People are coming back. Not to Yarmouth, but to NS. We all want that.
- What part of "Learn from history so we don't repeat it" is someone forgetting?
- Playing political football with any of our communities is simply wrong
- This one brings me to tears: In the first 24 hours after the words about possibly cancelling the ferry were uttered, I had three phone calls and a visit: two calls from folks who were in the process of purchasing land to build AirBNBs on were putting their plans on hold, one backed out altogether from purchasing a property and a 7-digit investor put his on hold pending what would happen with the ferry. Devastated? Understatement. Please don't think this is not happening in your community. We may not have heard it as quickly and bluntly as I did.
- This is not an issue between the Province and any municipal unit. This belongs with the Province and the Federal Government coming up with a plan to fund an INTERNATIONAL link. That the Town and our neighbouring units have already put millions into the ferry terminal is testament to our doing our part, although it again, should be a federal issue.
- Consumer confidence goes down. Folks thinking of starting a business are suddenly realizing without the ferry, they won't last long, so plans are put on hold or cancelled.

I could go on but will leave it here. I know Yarmouth benefits because they land here and depart from here. But our tourism tells us they don't stay. Again, we are great with that. As long as they are spending money in one of your communities we all win. If you're looking for tourism data, let me know and I'll send it out to you. It's unbelievable the impact this ferry has.

If you would consider doing the letter to the Premier and making sure copies go to each MLA and the opposition, and if you would somehow reach out to your business community and have them do the same, we will all benefit and of course I'll be beyond grateful. Feel free to cc me as well, although not necessary.

Thanks for all you do to build this Province through your own community building. We just can't go backwards. Not one of us.

Any questions, let me know! For those who know me well, I'm sure you're shocked at just how diplomatic this is!

😊 But you also know exactly what I'm feeling.

Thank you sincerely.

Mayor Pam Mood

Town of Yarmouth



Yarmouth and Acadian Shores Tourism Assoc.
932 Hwy 1 Hebron
Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
B0W 1X0
Canada

P. 902-400-0323
F. 902-742-7557
E. info@vasta.ca
W. yarmouthandacadianshores.com

Honourable Tim Houston
Premier of Nova Scotia
1700 Granville Street
P.O. Box 726
Halifax, NS B3J 2T3

Dear Premier Houston:

On behalf of the Yarmouth & Acadian Shores Tourism Association (YASTA) board, we are writing to address your recent comments and the Hon. Minister Masland's statements regarding the international ferry link to Maine. First, the message from Minister Masland suggesting the cancellation of the service is completely unacceptable. Minister Masland's suggestion that cancelling the ferry service "...would be a possibility, yes, absolutely," as reported by CBC on Thursday, September 8th, is outrageous. The Minister's comments damage the tourism industry's efforts to recover and leverage the service's opportunity. The Hon. Minister's remarks also jeopardize future tourism investment for 2023 and beyond. To suggest the government cancel the contract while the season is still ongoing is irresponsible and a put-down to tourism operators whose jobs and livelihoods depend on visitors arriving from the US. To publicly declare the possibility of cutting the service while simultaneously spending resources, energy, and marketing dollars to build demand for travel from the North East US is nonsensical. This rhetoric is especially damaging when considering the short booking window and that potential visitors are actively searching for vacation destinations. Could you blame these potential customers for making other plans? Small business owners have hung on through seemingly endless waves of Covid-19, business restrictions, limitations and shutdowns and are completely exhausted. They need the provincial government to support their efforts to recover. Stomping out progress while the regional tourism industry is working as hard as possible to leverage the province's investment in the ferry service is deflating and sabotaging efforts to rebuild the service. These comments obliterate consumer confidence that the ferry service will operate in the future.

Premier Houston, your public disappointment in passenger projections for the CAT ferry is discouraging and will only limit the service's success. Tourism is making a comeback, but the industry still faces years of recovery. Regional tourism numbers show positive growth because of the direct access we finally have to the US travel market. South West Nova Scotia is seeing the benefits of international visitors once again. Room night sales are up, revenue is increasing, and businesses are starting the road to recovery. We believe the Nova Scotia government should continue working with the tourism industry to ensure long-term, direct and consistent access to the North East US.

Over the past two years, tourism lost \$3.2 billion; businesses, restaurants, hotels and attractions closed. The casualties of these unprecedented downturns resulted in significant job losses and reduced tax revenues for the province. Many companies, including those in your riding and Minister Masland's, lost money and employees and acquired massive debt. If we are to recover our industry, the only way forward will be with your government as our partner. Nova Scotia needs to continue to be a unified brand and destination that potential travellers trust, is safe and consistently accessible. Threatening to close the door on one of the largest leisure travel markets in the world is not the path forward.

We who live and work in South West Nova Scotia are taxpayers like everyone else in the province. We are a valued part of Nova Scotia's tourism industry and are a crucial entry point for the region and Atlantic Canada. We see the value of the international link to the United States.



Yarmouth and Acadian Shores Tourism Assoc.
 932 Hwy 1 Hebron
 Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
 B0W 1X0
 Canada

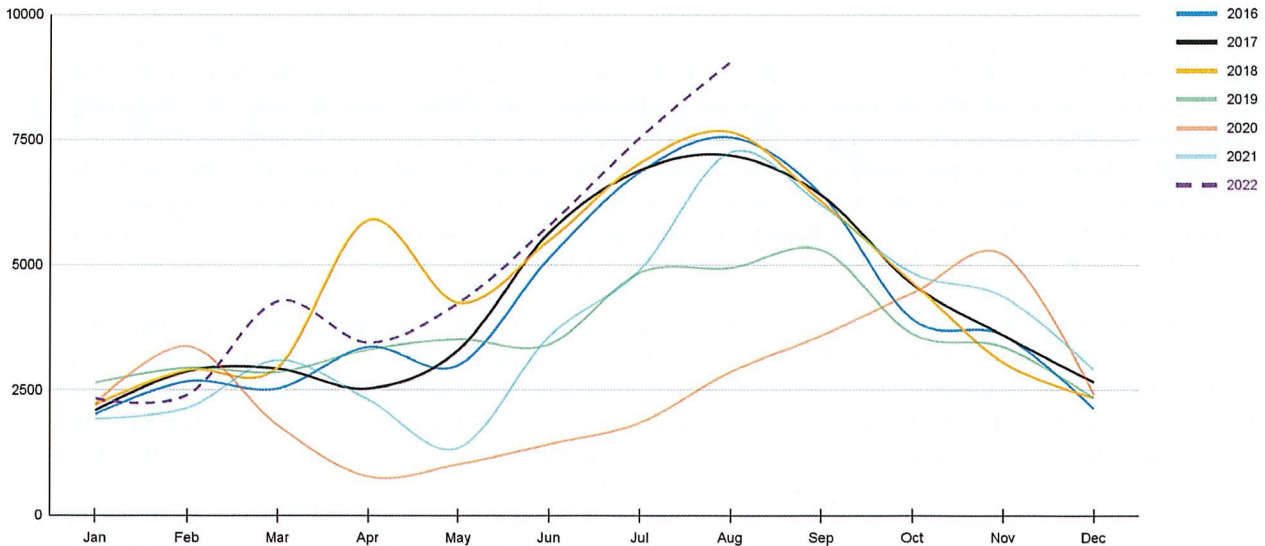
P. 902-400-0323
 F. 902-742-7557
 E. info@vasta.ca
 W. yarmouthandacadianshores.com

The Yarmouth levy data provides the following details. There has been a **47%** increase in room nights sold from January to August this year over last year by Yarmouth & Acadian Shores levy hotels (26,510 v. 39,119). Comparing room nights sold from January to August this year to pre-pandemic data from the same period in 2019 shows a **37%** increase in rooms sold. (28,436 v. 39,119). Recently, levy hotels began tracking as they once were when the ferry last operated and are **now exceeding 2018 room night sales by 2%**. (38,377 v. 39,119). 2018 was the best year we've had in the region. It's amazing to be reaching those numbers again and a testament to having direct access to the US travel market. **Levy hotels have sold more rooms from January to August 2022 than were sold during the same period in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.**

Source: Yarmouth levy

Room nights sold on the Airbnb platform from May to August 2022 in Yarmouth Co. have **increased by 70%** compared to the same period in 2019 (3844 v. 6532). Additionally, when we compare the **historic market revenue** of the regional Airbnb market (all municipalities in Yarmouth Co.) from May to August to pre-pandemic levels, we see an increase of **150%** in revenue of (518,000.00 v. 1,300,000.00) *Data supplied up to Sept. 14th, 2022.*

Levy Hotels RNS 2016-2022 Monthly Trends [Data Set 4] UD 11-14-22



When considering the success of the ferry service to Maine, passenger volume is an essential measure of the ferry. However, not the only one. Government must also consider the tourism landscape and the current realities. As of June 2022, Destination Canada reported that the number of visitors arriving by air from the US is down by **24%**. The number of visitors arriving by land from the US is down by **42%**, and the number of US visitors arriving by water (ferries) is down by **78%**. Nationally, all modes for overnight arrivals from the US are down compared to 2019. The CAT ferry passenger volume is projected to be just **25% below the last year of its operation** (40K~ v. 50K) and closely matches the drop in the number of visitors arriving by air from the US. The CAT ferry service **outperforms national trends** for overnight land and water arrivals when considering market recovery realities. If the provincial government wants to assist us in increasing passenger volume from the North East US onboard the CAT, perhaps the government of Nova Scotia could motivate the federal government to remove actual and perceived barriers to travel for Americans to Canada.

Source: [Overnight Arrivals Destination Canada](#)



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Challenges at the border are keeping Americans away. Only **54% of Americans surveyed feel confident to travel at this point.** Source: [Destination Canada Quarterly Tourism Snapshot](#)

64% of Americans surveyed believe there are restrictions or hassles related to Covid at the border.

Source: [Destination Canada US Sentiment to Travel to Canada](#)

Passenger spending and critical measures, including room nights sold, revenue, and passenger travel patterns, must be part of the government's analysis of the return on investment for the service. Ferry passengers spend, on average **2200 dollars per party** (average party is 2.2). In 2019 Yarmouth & Acadian Shores received only **6%** of all visitors travelling for pleasure to the province while HRM received **72%**. On average, visitors to Yarmouth & Acadian Shores spend just **two days** in the region. We speak to passengers who arrive on the CAT daily and know they travel throughout the province and spend their valuable dollars as they go. The international ferry link is critical to our success but benefits all of the province.

Source: [Tourism Nova Scotia Community Report 2019 Exit Survey](#)

Last June, Darlene Grant Fiander, President of The Tourism Industry Association, stated,

"In 2019, Tourism generated over \$400 Million in tax revenue for the government to fund social services like health care and education. When Tourism is back, Nova Scotia's economy will be fully back."

The government of NS should be working with South West Nova Scotia to leverage the opportunity and regional investment in the service and not make plans to end it. Passengers on this service visit, explore and spend throughout Nova Scotia. Every \$1 invested in tourism generates \$3.20 in the community.

The board of YASTA requests that your government clarify support for the continued long-term operation of the international ferry link to Maine and partner with Nova Scotia's tourism industry as we recover and once again become our #1 service export.

Sincerely,

Councillor Calvin d'Entremont
Municipality of the District of Argyle
YASTA Chair

Councillor Patti Durkee
Municipality of the District of Yarmouth
YASTA Vice Chair

Neil MacKenzie
YASTA CEO

CC.

Honourable Barbara Adams
Honourable Jill Balser
Honourable Brian Comer
Honourable Susan Corkum-Greek
Honourable Steve Craig
Honourable John Lohr

Honourable Becky Druhan
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