HIRA   Howe Island Ratepayers Association _____

925 North Shore Road,

Gananoque, Ontario. K7G2V6

April 18, 2018

Mayor Denis Doyle and Council Members

Township of Howe Island

90 Baseline Road,

RR#4 Gananoque Ontario

K7G2V6

Re: Howe Island Foot Ferry

Dear Councilors:

This week you have notified Howe Island residents that the Foot Ferry will not be going out of service as originally scheduled. You had previously said that the Ferry would be out of service for deck refurbishment for approximately three months starting April 16, 2018. In your notice to residents you said updates would follow. No reason was given in your notice as to this sudden change in plan and since receipt of your notice there has been a total lack of communication as to what has caused the change leading to wild speculation from contract issues to whether the ferry is worth repairing. The Ferry has served the Island well but is many many years old.

We have been provided with several exchanges of emails between concerned residents and Council members and between residents.

It is very clear to all residents of the Howe Island and should be equally clear to members of this Council (three out of five of whom are not Howe Island residents but residents of Wolfe Island) that the number one priority for this Howe Island Community is transportation to and from the Island.

It is trite to say that removing the Foot Ferry from service for an extended period of time results in an extreme inconvenience to Ferry users, mostly residents of Howe. Now that the timetable has been changed, the inconvenience will increase in magnitude as residents have no doubt made plans around the disruption period.

We strongly suggest that it is high time for this Council to step back from the decision to take the Ferry out of service now and delay removing the Ferry until a Council has in hand a reliable report of experts on the true state of repair and safety of the Foot Ferry and a list of options on repairing or replacing the Ferry. If the most practical and business case supported option is to repair, that option must be accompanied by a replacement ferry while repairs are ongoing. It is completely unacceptable to Howe Islanders to constantly get from this Council and from the County, with regard to the main Ferry, a simple apology for the inconvenience caused when either ferry is out of service.

It has come to our attention that when Council took the decision to take the Foot Ferry out of service, Council never even considered trying to source a replacement ferry so that users would continue to have full ferry service. That information is extremely disappointing and frankly shows a total disregard by Council that transportation is the number one priority for this Community.

Taking a ferry out of service should not happen without contingency provisions to lessen the inconvenience to Islanders. One of the provisions HIRA has suggested in the past was the installation of internet connected cameras at the ferry terminals (similar to the cameras currently installed regarding the Wolfe Island ferry) to give ferry users real time information on ferry position and length of line-ups. We first raised this suggestion with Council in our letter of August, 8 2017, and then again in our letter to Council of September 8, 2017 and then again in our letter to Council of January 6 2018. We have had absolutely no communication from Council as to the status of our suggestion since asking for an update in our most recent letter.

We urge you to step back as suggested here and look forward to hearing that you have done so.

Yours truly,

"Bill Robertson"

Bill Robertson, Chair

HIRA

wrobertson925@gmail.com

 cc To the following by email: Sophie Kiwala MPP; Kelly Pender, CAO, County of Frontenac; Councilors Natalie Nossal, Bruce Higgs, Barbara Springgay and Wayne Grant; and HIRA Board Members. To the following by mail: The Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport, Government of Canada;

The Honourable Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Transportation, Province of Ontario; Mark Garretson MP.