

Mayor Denis Doyle Email Response to HIRA letter of April 18, 2018

On Fri, Apr 20, 2018 at 7:44 AM, denis <denisdoyle@kos.net> wrote:

Bill,

Thanks for your email. Our Public Works Manager, Rob Dillabough, as outlined in the attached notification was assigned by Council to coordinate this project and be the contact point for all questions on the ferry deck contract. First of all I want to say that safety is our utmost concern and I want to assure you that the Howe Islander foot ferry is safe, and there is no urgency to do this work that Transport Canada ask to be done by the next major safety inspection which is not due for over a year. With MTO paying most of the cost of the deck work currently under review I hope you can appreciate that they have to be involved in every step of the process as is Transport Canada, the contractor doing the work, and the Marine Engineering firm hired to project manage this work, so it takes more time to make decisions that we would like. Some questions have come up on the scheduling of this work and Rob is feverishly working with all partners on this and he hoped to have answers for Council and the public by the end of this week, but he is not the only player here and he has been waiting for answers all week. Let me assure you that those Councillors on Wolfe Island having lived through a nightmare the last time the Wolfe Islander three (WI-III) went in for inspection understand this issue from first hand experience and have Howe Island residents concerns in mind and know that all Frontenac Islanders have transportation to and from our beautiful Islands as top priority. The WI-III was taken to drydock in early April with the promise it would be back by mid-June, a few weeks into the project we were notified it would not be back until late June, and a few weeks later this date was moved to mid-July, and then we were advised it would be back by early August, the next communication stated they did not have even an estimate date when it would return, we eventually got it back in November. During this period in busy times of the day and week Wolfe Ferry users were waiting 3 to 4 hours to get a vehicle on the ferry, as our backup ferry would only carry a bit over half the cars as the WI-III could hold. We do not want Howe Island residents to go through this nightmare, thus hope you can appreciate that we cannot allow the Howe vessel to be taken out of service until we receive assurance that it will be back before the end of June, and if not reschedule the work outside the very busy summer season.

Our contract for the repair on the Howe Islander gives a dead line that the ferry must be back before the end of June, and I hope you can appreciate that if we can not get absolute assurance that it will be back by the end of June, it would be inappropriate that we take it out of the water, particularly since we still have well over a year to get this work done and there is no urgency. We know from the last WI-III seven month outage that one of the biggest delays is when you get into this kind of work and things come up that were not obvious before putting the vessel in dry dock, and cutting the vessel apart, you have to get Transport Canada Inspectors to sign off on

additional repairs before doing them and then get them back at various milestones to inspect the repair work. Please try to be patient and give Rob time to get accurate and updated information from all the partners and have options to discuss. There are enough of us losing sleep over this unfortunate situation and issue and we want to avoid a crisis like happened with the recent work on the WI-III, so please try to understand and give staff and partners time to do their work . As soon as options and or a plan is put together everyone will be advised. Mean while the Foot Ferry service will safely operate as normal.

Regarding your suggestion on the MTO camera system installed on the WI-III ferry docks, while this was discussed at budget time the priority this year was decided to be the deck replacement on the Howe Foot Ferry. This internet camera system is basically part of an Ontario wide system MTO have along major highways and while an interesting system, and some residents may use it, it does nothing to improve the ferry service and now that it has been installed for a few years for the Wolfe system I have not heard from anyone that finds it particularly useful, and I know that our household never uses it as by the time we leave our house and get in the ferry lineup things can completely change!

Also I hope that you can appreciate the Provincial rules will not allow us to discuss options outside a formally called open Council meeting and I offer this brief report to give you as much information as we have at this time. If there are decisions to be made that, as Public Works Manager, Rob cannot make this will be done in a meeting open to the public and not by email, so please watch for notification of such meeting should it be needed.

Best regards and wishing all a good weekend, Denis

Denis:

HIRA Response to Mayor Denis Doyle

Thank you for your reply to HIRA's letter dated April 18th, 2018.

Your reply has not allayed our concerns regarding the Foot Ferry being out of service for three months.

Firstly, you have not addressed in your reply our concern about your not attempting to source a replacement ferry for the out of service period. With the involvement of your partners in this project, namely the DOT and the MTO, surely they can assist in finding a replacement and dealing with approving any such replacement on an expedited basis.

Secondly, we are all well aware of the problems Wolfe Island ferry users had when that ferry was taken out of service for repairs and those problems have clearly demonstrated to us that well thought out contingent plans must be in place before the Foot ferry is taken out of service.

Thirdly, on the subject of real time internet connected cameras being placed at the ferry terminals, in your reply, you dismissed the idea on the basis that you believe the existing cameras at Wolfe Island ferry terminals provide no assistance to users of that ferry, as due to distances travelled on Wolfe, line-ups will have changed between viewing a real time picture of the line-up and arriving at that ferry. Denis, Howe and Wolfe should never be viewed as one and the same. Howe is only 12 square miles; Wolfe is 48 square miles. Distances travelled on Howe are significantly less than on Wolfe. Most residents on Howe can reach the ferry closest to them in a few minutes. Thus, reviewing real time pictures of ferry position and length of line-ups could be very helpful in deciding when to travel to the ferry and, when two ferries are operating, which ferry to use. We urge you to reconsider the cameras suggestion, one that was made by HIRA nine months ago and in respect of which Council instructed staff to investigate (according to the Minutes of Council dated October 10, 2017).

Fourthly, you have said in your reply that there is no urgency to get the repair work done and that the contract says that the ferry must be back in service by the end of June. With the sudden delay in the start of the previously scheduled ferry take out period, and the apparent difficulties being experienced with this project, either with the state of repair of the ferry, the contract itself, the contractor or timing, we would again urge Council to step back and re-examine whether the better option for the Foot Ferry is to replace rather than repair. It seems to us that the window of opportunity for getting repairs done by the end of June (only 69 days from now) has closed and delaying the project now will give Council and its partners in this project time needed to reconsider what's best for this Community in terms of the Foot ferry.

Kind regards

Bill

Bill Robertson
Chair, Howe Island Ratepayers Association