

High fares good for the environment, *Flying Shingle*, p.3, December 23, 2007

Dear editor

Sometime last summer, the “Globe and Mail” had two major news items on its front page. One was about the uproar in Ontario by motorists over the rising price of gasoline. The other, was on a yet another dire warning by scientists about the effects of global warming and the continuing rise in the quantity of greenhouse gas we emit. Surely I thought, turning to the editorial page, somebody must have noticed the incongruity of simultaneously demanding that the price of fossil fuel be dropped, and that we stop using so much of it. But no. That was Ontario. So I let it pass. Then blow me down if the same thing didn't happen again, but this time on Gabriola. Side-by-side on the front page of the “*Gabriola SOUNDER*” last October was an article on the visit by Guy Dauncey. He came with his advice on how we can help cut greenhouse gas emissions, advice, which inevitably included the recommendation that we make less use of transportation. And next to it on the front page? An article about the outrageousness of higher ferry fares.

A few years ago, I got caught out in Nanaimo in the Wednesday night missed-ferry-sailing, which is when they re-fuel the ferry. So I got to chatting to the driver of the fuel truck. How much fuel? We reckoned the Gabriola ferry must use close to a million litres of diesel fuel a year, which is used to make some 5740 round-trip sailings. A million litres, to put it in more meaningful terms, is about the amount of fuel that would be consumed in a year by 600 ordinary-sized cars driven for between 15,000 and 20,000 kilometres. I would respectfully submit that at the very least capping the amount of fuel we burn on the ferry should be Gabriolans' goal, and, we should reduce it as much as possible given that doing so would be more effective than having a bus on the island. By far the simplest way, and possibly the only way, of encouraging people to do that is to raise the price of a ferry ticket. This will at least cap demand, and might even eventually lead to a reduced number of sailings and our becoming used to a reduction in the ferry's speed.

Yes, reduced ferry usage will change life as we know it, but wasn't that what the loudly-applauded Guy Dauncey's message was? Being slightly more isolated won't be so bad. It is, after all, one of the defining attributes of an island community.

Sincerely

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