A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY FOR THE PEOPLE AND ECONOMY OF FOGO ISLAND

PRESENTED

BY

MAYOR ANDREW SHEA AND THE FOGO ISLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

TO

MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION AND WORKS
APRIL 8, 2014
A. **PURPOSE**

**FOGO ISLAND DOES NOT HAVE A “FERRY PROBLEM”**.

**FOGO ISLAND HAS A TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROBLEM.**

This submission contains the basic requirements for a comprehensive transportation strategy for Fogo Island that addresses both:

- the need for urgent and immediate action to improve the ferry service; and,
- additional transportation initiatives to support the growth of the Fogo Island economy and better serve its people.

The funding for the whole of the strategy should be “rounded up” on top of the budget already allocated for the new ferry program and bundled with the new ferry program as a natural and logical add-on.

A comprehensive transportation strategy for Fogo Island makes economic, social and political good sense. It is an investment that benefits the entire northeast coast region as well as the provincial economy and enhances our reputation in international markets. It is a win/win strategy for all.

The strategy covers four main areas:

- Minimum acceptable standards of service and operations for ferry service from Farewell to Fogo Island;
- Other road and air components to improve travel for Fogo Island residents and businesses, especially to meet the needs of a fast-growing international tourism sector as well as our processing and export-driven fishing industry; and,
- An ongoing collaborative process for effective communication and consultation in order to ensure timely implementation of the improved ferry standards and the entire transportation strategy.
- Upgrading of wharves at Farewell and Man of War Cove including installation of hydraulic ramps on wharves
B. BACKGROUND

The current transportation infrastructure serving Fogo Island, notably the problem-plagued ferry service and an inadequate 3000-foot airstrip, is based on the needs of a bygone era. The outdated infrastructure does not meet the needs of today's Fogo Island economy and society. The current transportation service is certainly not sufficient to support future economic growth and the development of our island society. In fact, the transportation service as it now exists, even with the planned new ferry, is the single most important obstacle to growth and prosperity.

The new ferry will eventually improve reliability (ice capable and less subject to the mechanical problems of our current aged vessel). However, the vehicle carrying capacity of the new ferry will be about the same as that of the current vessel. The new ferry will not even meet current capacity needs. The new ferry will certainly not be able to meet Fogo Island's needs for future growth.

Historically, the Fogo Island transportation service was built to serve the very limited travel needs of local residents, mainly for trips to the Gander and surrounding areas; medical and other emergencies; and, the transport of consumable goods to the Island. These very basic, localized purposes must still be served, but the transportation infrastructure must be substantially improved to keep pace with our fast-growing tourism sector, our export-oriented fishing industry and the modern travel needs of our island residents and small businesses.

We contend that our provincial government has a duty and obligation to provide a modern transportation infrastructure that serves and supports our growing economy, especially access to international markets. We are no longer the isolated island community that is satisfied to accept the status quo or, worse, the never-ending reductions in the standards of our transportation service. Nor is Fogo Island among the unfortunate rural areas of our province seemingly destined
to de-populate and disappear without new private investment or improvements in public infrastructure and services. Quite the contrary, Fogo Island is growing, has new hope for its future and the world is taking notice – buying our products and coming to visit. It is now time for our government decision-makers to join with us to provide a transportation infrastructure that supports our growth and provides international visitors with a positive travel experience befitting an acclaimed tourist destination and a reliable supplier of fish and other products.

From our perspective, the form and substance of past consultative processes with the department have not been effective when judged against the results. We will, going forward, judge the effectiveness of consultation by the resulting action and measurable outcomes rather than the number or frequency of meetings and discussions.

We will no longer accept decisions that negatively impact our economic prosperity and social well-being. Fogo Islanders will no longer be satisfied just to be listened to politely, given vague promises and then to be sent away with no concrete follow-up action taken to address our needs and concerns – a process repeated with all-too-much frequency in past years.

We are at an inflection point in our economic and social history and we are determined to do everything in our power as a united Island to not allow our woefully inadequate transportation infrastructure impede our journey into a more promising future. We are confident that our provincial government has the will and the resources to help us succeed.

As a first step, the newly elected Town Council has established a joint transportation committee composed of two councillors and five members from the community elected at large to speak with one united voice and to work with our provincial government and others to implement all of the components of this comprehensive transportation strategy.
This submission represents our collective, united voice and unanimous agreement on the minimum standards of service and operations that we need urgently for the ferry service. We are equally in full and unanimous agreement on the other transportation infrastructure components to be addressed as an integral and inseparable part of the strategy.

The time has come to discard empty rhetoric. The time has come to take action. The time is long overdue to bring Fogo Island transportation services into the modern era where road, ferry and air services enable economic growth for the betterment of our people.

Adoption of an agreed transportation strategy, provision of the required investment and a commitment to work together with good will are the essential ingredients for success.

We are confident that together we can bring Fogo Island’s transportation system up to the same standards of service and quality that Fogo Island itself offers to the world as a high-end tourist destination and a reliable supplier of fish and other products in international markets.

C. THE COMPONENTS OF THE STRATEGY

The following represents the most significant areas for improvement and additional services required to give Fogo Island a transportation infrastructure and level of service that is needed by our modern economy and society.

1. NON-STOP TO/FROM FOGO ISLAND
Fogo Island must have its own dedicated ferry that is not encumbered by the needs and requirements of Change Islands. There is sufficient direct traffic throughout the entire year to/from Fogo Island to justify a dedicated, non-stop ferry service.
2. FERRY SCHEDULE
The Fogo Island ferry must operate on a single, year-round schedule that does not change with the seasons. Fogo Island is open year round unlike most other outport communities that close their doors during the winter. Fogo Island is an all-season destination and is being marketed as such around the world. Our ferry service needs to adapt to that reality, including coordinating its sailing times with flight arrivals and departures at Gander International Airport.

Appendix A details the year-round schedule for when the Earl Winsor returns to service.

3. CHANGES TO FERRY SCHEDULE
There are two requirements to be met in respect of any change to the established ferry schedules outlined in the two Appendices:
   i) no change will be made without the prior consent of the Chair, Fogo Island Transportation Committee, and providing seven days advance notice of change;
   ii) the voice recording and the website will immediately reflect the change so that the traveling public has accurate and timely information.

It is understood that the requirement for prior consent does not apply when the Captain must make on-the-spot decisions with respect to the safety of the vessel, its crew and passengers or when the vessel is responding to an emergency.

4. 30-MINUTE RULE
Should a ferry sailing be combined with Change Islands, the 30-minute rule will apply at both Farewell and Fogo Island.

5. DANGEROUS GOODS
Sunday is the only day of the week acceptable to us for the movement of dangerous goods because it interferes least with traveling public. This day is to be kept constant year-round. Schedules A indicate the acceptable sailing times for dangerous goods. This should be reviewed regularly and adjusted based on travel patterns.
During festival weekends dangerous goods sailing should be postponed.

6. **PROOF OF PAYMENT ON BOARDING THE FERRY**
The department must immediately implement effective operational procedures and usage reporting to avoid widely known and continuing abuse by people using the ferry without paying. Transparent operational management must be implemented by the mandatory use of “proof of payment” at the point of driving or walking onto the ferry by requiring the showing of the receipt for payment made at the ticket booth.

7. **FREE TRAVEL FOR FERRY EMPLOYEES AND FAMILIES**
In order to prevent abuse and provide transparency the free use of the ferry by employees and their families must be more tightly managed through the recording of the names, relationship to the employee and dates of travel of each non-paying person and vehicle. TW will collect and report the aggregated usage statistics to the Fogo Island Transportation Committee on a quarterly basis.

8. **FERRY COMMON AREA CLEANLINESS**
Residents and visitors alike are appalled by the unclean, shabby and unsanitary conditions on the ferries that serve us. This must be corrected immediately by introduction of a stringent and customer-focused cleanup and interior maintenance program.

9. **FAREWELL & MAN O’WAR COVE TERMINALS**
While the condition of the ferries is appalling, it pales in comparison to the stench and uncleanliness of the two ferry terminals. Immediate attention is needed to fix the unsanitary and unhealthy conditions at Farewell. Major cleanup is immediately needed to make both terminals welcoming and comfortable places for local and international travelers.

The unsightly commercial signs that populate the areas around the two terminals must be removed. We market Fogo Island for its beau-
ty and unspoiled landscapes and yet we assault our visitors on their arrival at the terminals with a wilderness of awful advertising signage.

10. **TOURIST INFORMATION & ELECTRONIC SCHEDULE BOARDS**
International and other tourists as well as business travelers need information and to be made to feel welcomed. The department must place trained personnel at both Farewell and Man O’ War terminals who can provide ferry-specific information as well as more general tourist information to visitors on their arrival and departure at both terminals.

TW is also to install appropriate electronic boards at each terminal giving the full and up-to-date status of each sailing for that day.

11. **CELLPHONE SERVICE AT FAREWELL**
The department will undertake the necessary action through private suppliers and/or its own investment to provide reliable cellphone service at the Farewell ferry terminal area. At minimum, the terminal must be equipped with a telephone so that residents and visitors are able to communicate with their families, business colleagues and the hospitality establishments where they will be staying.

12. **AIR SUBSTITUTION FOR FERRY SERVICE**
When the ferry is not able to operate on schedule due to ice conditions, mechanical breakdowns or other problems, the current 24-hour wait period before the start of the substitute air service must be reduced to a maximum of 3 hours from the time of the first missed ferry departure time.

Residents and visitors incur substantial inconvenience and cost (for missed commercial flights, business meetings, medical appointments, etc.) due to the current 24-hour wait period. This must be immediately changed.

Appendix B provides the schedule for the substitute air service with flights leaving at 7:30 a.m. from Gander and the ending with the last flight from Fogo Island at 7:00 p.m.
In addition, the management of the air service from a passenger perspective needs major improvement. The public needs to be provided with a telephone number to call in order to book a seat for a specific flight time and be required to check in at the airstrip terminal not later than 15 minutes before the booked flight. If someone misses their booked flight, they go to the bottom of the waiting list for placement on an available later flight (not, as took place last winter, be given priority for the very next flight by displacing others already in line).

The air schedule and telephone number must be immediately added to the website and the voice recording for the ferry.

13. FERRY MANAGEMENT OFFICE
Common sense dictates that the TW office tasked with management of the Fogo Island ferry service be relocated to Fogo Island as soon as possible. This is a key to the successful management of our transportation services and improvements outlined in this strategy.

On-site management works best. Absentee landlords and managers are unable to see and feel the impact of their daily decisions; can not be as sensitive to local needs as they should be; and are faced with too much difficulty in maintaining good communication and consultation with the clients they are mandated to serve.

14. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES
When medical emergencies occur, they are by definition time-critical and urgent – they are bona fide emergencies. As residents, when such emergencies occur it is reasonable to expect that air ambulance service will be employed, subject to weather conditions.

It is our experience that the ferry service is now being misused under the guise of “emergency” with resulting unnecessary disruption, cost and inconvenience to the traveling public.

The ferry service must only be engaged to serve emergency purposes when weather conditions prevent the use of air ambulance services or the emergency is at sea.
15. **EXTEND THE FOGO ISLAND AIRSTRIP**
In order to meet the demands of the high-end tourist market and to serve the needs of our growing freight and product export businesses, the Fogo Island airstrip must be lengthened to handle aircraft with higher passenger and weight capacities.

Good road, ferry and air transport is essential to foster and support economic growth. It is even more critically important for an island economy.

When the Fogo Island airstrip was constructed, the decision to build a 3000 foot strip, (compared to others in the province with 4000 to 5000 foot lengths), might have been considered adequate at the time it was built. Like the ferry, the airstrip is another example of something built to serve the needs of a bygone era. There is now an urgent need for a 5000 feet runway to serve our current and future business and travel needs. We are already losing business in the high-end tourism market because of the all-too-short airstrip.

16. **HIGHWAY CONDITIONS TO FAREWELL & SIGNAGE**
Certain areas of the highways between Gander and Farewell, especially in the Stoneville area, are badly in need of repair and upgrading. This is the first impression of our northeast coastal area created in the minds of our international and other Canadian visitors. The condition of these highways also poses a heightened safety concern for vehicles and their occupants. Accidents are simply waiting to happen because of the poor condition of these highways. Road maintenance programs need to be substantially improved to provide safe driving conditions.

It is also a requirement that the adequacy of the highway and Gander area signage be reviewed to ensure that directions to the Farewell ferry terminal are sufficient for the first-time visitor traveling to Fogo Island.
17. **AN OPTIONAL RESERVATION/ADVANCE PAYMENT SYSTEM**
Modern and efficient transportation systems usually have a reservation system to ensure reasonable levels of certainty for travelers, absent bad weather and mechanical issues. Key to a successful reservation system is a reasonably reliable and consistent schedule.

We are confident that the schedule and other improvements contained in this strategy provide sufficient efficiency and reliability to introduce a reservation system for the ferry as an optional, premium fare service. Essentially, resident and non-resident travelers have the option of booking a reservation for a specific sailing time. Those who choose not to book a reservation simply line up as they do at present and take their chances.

We would welcome participating in a pilot project to test the reservations system.

18. **ADDITIONAL FERRY FOR PEAK SEASON**
In order to serve residents and visitors alike a second ferry is required from May 1 to December 31st.

19. **IMPROVED DATA CAPTURE**
MOTW must begin to collect and share data that will accurately show the traffic on both routes. In addition is is required for safety issues in the event of an emergency.

20. **LONG RANGE PLANS FOR REPLACEMENT VESSELS**
MOTW must have a strategic plan in place for replacement vessels during the annual refit of the Windsor and or the new ferry.
D. CONSULTATION PROCESS

Effective consultation must be based on common objectives, shared facts, open and frank dialogue and trust in order to be effective. Regular meetings and ongoing discussion between designated representatives are required to keep the channels open and free of misunderstandings and misinformation.

The Town Council of Fogo Island has established its 7-person Transportation Committee and tasked it with consultation within our island community and with the Department of Transportation and Works. The Committee communicates officially through its Chair, an elected Town Councillor.

We ask that the Department of Transportation and Works designate specific members of its staff representing roads, air and ferry services to be the consultative counterparts to the Fogo Island Transportation Committee.

The Joint Transportation Consultative Committee (or other name as may be chosen later) will be provided with TW’s written annual operational and budget plan for Fogo Island covering roads, air and ferry services. TW will also provide the Joint Committee with quarterly progress reports and updates against the plan. The department will also provide relevant studies, statistics and reports to the Joint Committee.

The Joint Committee will meet not less than quarterly on Fogo Island. The Chair and Secretary of the Joint Committee will be elected from its membership at its first meeting. The Chair and Secretary shall not be from the same “side” and will alternate every two years.

The Joint Committee shall prepare minutes of all meetings for distribution to its members.
The Joint Committee will prepare an annual report of its work for the information of the Town Council of Fogo Island and the Minister of Transportation and Works.

E. CONCLUSION

The current transportation situation is damaging our international reputation and stifling our economic growth. The need to improve is urgent. We are unanimous about what needs to be done. We are determined to succeed. We anticipate the willingness, and full partnership, of our provincial government to announce and implement this Comprehensive Transportation Strategy for Fogo Island.

Appendix A

Earl W. Winsor ~ Permanent Year-Round Schedule

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<th>Fogo to Farewell</th>
<th>Farewell to Fogo</th>
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<td>7:00 am direct</td>
<td>9:00 am direct</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15 am via Change</td>
<td>11:45 am via Change *</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:45 pm via Change</td>
<td>3:15 pm via Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:30 pm via Change *</td>
<td>5:45 pm via Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00 pm direct</td>
<td>9:00 pm direct</td>
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* Dangerous goods:
Sunday
*11:45 am Farewell to Fogo
*4:30 pm Fogo to Farewell
Appendix B

**Substitute Air Service Schedule**: Gander Airport to Fogo Island Airstrip

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<tr>
<th>Gander to Fogo</th>
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Flights to start within three hours of the ferry not meeting its scheduled departure time.

Seats to be booked in advance by phone.

Check in at the counter 15 minutes before scheduled departure or forfeit the seat and go to the bottom of the waiting list for next available empty seat.