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Plans for Denman cable ferry a surprise

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At a September 23 meeting on Denman Island, BC Ferries presented the community with plans to build a cable ferry between Buckley Bay and Denman Island. Although the proposal was brought to the attention of the Ferry Advisory Committee in 2009, Denman-Hornby FAC Chair Tony Law says very little information was available at that point.

The environmental assessment for the project is now complete and the process to find an Alternate Service Provider is scheduled until March 2012, with design and tendering to be completed between now and July 2012. Construction would begin next summer and last about one year.

About 250 people, almost half of Denman's population, came to the information session. The community response was overwhelmingly negative, reports Tony Law. The issue also dominated the September 27 meeting held by the BC Ferry Commission, with strong opposition to the plan.

The proposal states that the ferry would require half as many crew as are currently needed on the *MV Quinitsa*.

However, according to Law, Transport Canada does not make decisions about crewing until after a vessel is built. Not only are there safety concerns with only three crew for 150 passengers, the business case would not necessarily be viable with a crew over three. Other concerns include the possibility that 15-20 full and part-time jobs provided by the ferry run would be lost.

In a September 28 letter to BC Ferries CEO David Hahn, Law communicates the concerns expressed at the two meetings and states that he has requested, through Darin Guenette, that time be provided for the Denman-Hornby Ferry Advisory Committee to have an opportunity to formally develop and provide recommendations at its upcoming fall meeting.

Should the project go ahead, it will be the longest cable ferry in the world.

See the fall Ferry Advisory Committee meetings scheduled, on page 11. 