

Reprint Island Tides

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Reprint from Volume 25 Number 06

March 28, 2013

Victoria nearly moved to Alberta—fun with figures -

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This year's April 1 ferry fare increase, although politically modified to a mere four percent on all routes, has the add-on effect of moving Victoria nearly out of province. Moving the provincial government further off-shore may not seem such a bad idea but reducing contact with the beautiful Island of Vancouver certainly feels like a loss.

Vancouver Island Gone West

A simple calculation shows this distancing. It goes like this:

Suppose two Vancouver adults in an average size vehicle want to make a return trip to Victoria. Their ferry fares, without reservations, will total \$164.50 (\$51.25 for the car, + driver and passenger at \$15.50 each = \$82.25—multiply by two because this is a Tsawwassen–Swartz Bay return trip).

Now add to that their gasoline costs, assume their car gets 10km/litre, and a litre of gasoline costs \$1.30, it costs 13¢ per kilometer. In addition to the ferry trip, they have to drive 69 kilometres each way, or 138 kilometres return, or $138 \times 0.13 = \$17.94$.

So the total cost of the return trip is $\$164.50 + \$17.94 = \$182.44$.

Try Going East

To figure out how far our couple could get for \$182.44, if they left Vancouver and went east—where the trip would not involve ferries—divide \$182.44 by 0.13 = 1,403 kilometres. Now divide that by 2 (for a round trip) and look up where they are if they drove east 701 kilometres from Vancouver. They are 12 kilometres from Golden, which is nearly on the Alberta border.

With all due respect to this charming small town in the Rockies, most people would rather visit Victoria, even if it is adrift in the Pacific Ocean.

The point to take away from this calculation is that Vancouver Island has been 'moved' nearly out of BC.

Using a similar calculation, Vancouver residents who may wish to visit the Gulf Islands will find that a return fare for two adults and a car from Tsawwassen is \$135.30. Add the distance to Tsawwassen, divide by 13¢/kilometer, and you could have gone anywhere in the Okanagan and most of the Cariboo, and you didn't have to wait for a ferry or make reservations. Even more hilarious (or pitiful).

Saturna in Seattle

On routes between Gulf Islands, ferry fare increases over the

past ten years have effectively moved them so far apart that any economies of scale are impossible. For example, going from Pender to Saturna in the Southern Islands: one-way fare for car \$13.10, 2 adults at \$6, total \$25.10. Divide by 13 cents/kilometer = 193km. *Saturna is 193 km from Pender.* It's a wonder that people on Pender and Mayne can see it out the kitchen window.

Other islands which thought they were in spitting distance are also deluded. In our for-fun calculation, Denman and Hornby are 157km apart and Quadra and Cortes are 184km apart!

Island Drift Will Increase?

Added to all that, government has promised that fares will continue to increase at some 4% per year, way out of line with the cost of anything else. These continuing increases have changed, and will continue to change, life on all the Islands, big and small and not for the better.

Isn't it time for a completely different funding model for our ferries? ☞

PS: We wish this *was* an April Fool's joke.

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*'This article was published (March 28, 2013) in 'Island Tides',
an independent, regional newspaper distributing across the Strait of Georgia on the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island.'*

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