

To the Editor

Recently the BC Chamber of Commerce sent out an invite to the public of British Columbia, through its Chamber network, outlining a contest noted as the **Rural – Urbans Editorial**. The question presented was “How can the Diminishing Rural Population continue to sustain urban BC?” The question itself comes about due to the reality of a significant shift in populations while recognizing that urban BC needs the resources as developed and produced by its rural neighbours.

Now, why am I writing an editorial on this as opposed to simply writing to the BC Chamber and entering the contest?

Well, on Saturday April 11th the Victoria Times Colonist published an editorial on its Comment page penned by my colleague – Mr. Bruce Carter – CEO of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce. The title of the article was written as ***“Ferry rates an unfair burden to Greater Victoria.”*** Fair enough; they are. However, within the article there was one quote in particular that I find problematic and in fact, it is that quote that goes back to the problem identified through the BC Chamber of Commerce ‘contest.’ Mr. Carter is quoted as saying ***“Simply put, why do the citizens of Greater Victoria have to pay to keep Island communities viable?”***

This quote clearly demonstrates that many within Urban BC simply don’t understand or recognize the value and the importance of the contributions of Rural BC. They may not even understand that they need for us, for Rural BC to prosper and flourish so that Urban BC can continue its growth patterns.

Through the balance of his editorial Mr. Carter accurately refers to the continued pricing increases as proposed and implemented by BC Ferries, as unsustainable and counterproductive to their own objectives. He suggests, quite accurately, that by increasing rates they are decreasing ridership which of course hurts not only Greater Victoria but all Coastal Communities and oddly...it hurts the entire populace of British Columbia.

So, with respect to the BC Chamber of Commerce question I offer this comment.

Urban BC should see themselves as the front lawn of British Columbia. They are the most visible areas thus they should be manicured and kept up to the best of our collective ability. They (Urban BC) should also recognize that their back lawns, the parts not seen as often, are just as important to the value of their overall economy. It is the back lawn that produces the gardens and often the foods that we all need. As Executive Director of the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce I invite the Business Community of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce to work with us as we push for more equitable Ferry rates and schedules that are developed to increase ridership while allowing us to move our goods and people as is necessary for the good of all.

Should you wish to enter the contest with the BC Chamber of Commerce please feel free to visit our website at www.albernichamber.ca to download the information required.