

Mayor & Council

From: Leisa Yee <dfi.leisa@outlook.com>
Sent: April 13, 2026 6:09 PM
To: Iqra Ishtiaq; McKnight, Jill - M.P.
Cc: Steven.MacKinnon@parl.gc.ca; heath.macdonald@parl.gc.ca; Lana.Popham.MLA@leg.bc.ca; AF.Minister@gov.bc.ca; TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca; Kevin Quinn; Mayor George Harvie; Peter.Xotta@portvancouver.com; Mayor & Council; Paton.MLA, Ian; City Manager; Hugh Reynolds; Lydia Ryall; Nancy (telus); Brent Harris; Brent Harris; Nancy Chong
Subject: Delta Farmers Institute Request: Review of Marine Operations in Canoe Pass Inlet, Delta BC - letter enclosed
Attachments: Canoe Pass Westham Is bridge MP McKnight 13Apr 2026 final.pdf

Warning: This email came from outside the City of Delta. links or attachments. Contact the Service Desk (3215)
Dear Hon. Jill McKnight,

TYPE: REGULAR COUNCIL
DEPT: CS
A.T. #: 150576
Comments: Regular Agenda
Apr. 27/26

On behalf of the Delta Farmers Institute enclosed is a letter of request concerning the review of the marine operations in Delta BC's Canoe Pass Inlet.

We appreciate your assistance and thank you for the time you have given to our members affected by the Westham Island bridge closure.

While the swing bridge is closed to marine traffic for the emergency repair period, we look forward to hearing from you on the review process.

A genda
FILE # 8700-01

Sincerely,

Leisa Yee | Administration
Delta Farmers Institute | PO Box 18565 Delta, BC V4K 4V7
Tel/Fax: 604-940-2024 | Toll Free: 1-888-940-2024 | Cell: 604-880-9936 | Email: lyeedfi@telus.net
Please note my office days: Tuesday - Thursday.
I may not be able to respond to you immediately. Thank you for your patience.



Staff Recommendation: THAT the correspondence from Delta Farmers Institute dated April 13, 2026, regarding marine operations in Canoe Pass Inlet, be received into the record.



April 13, 2026

Honourable Jill McKnight, Minister of Veteran Affairs, MP, Delta, British Columbia
Constituency office
5064 48th Avenue
Delta, BC V4K 1V8

Via email: igra.ishtiaq.668@parl.gc.ca
Jill.mcknight@parl.gc.ca

Dear Jill McKnight,

Review of marine operations in Canoe Pass Inlet, Delta BC

I am writing to you on behalf of the Delta Farmers Institute (DFI), the representative organization for farmers in Delta, British Columbia. Our members were impacted by the Westham Island bridge closure due to a barge strike on January 20, 2026.

We understand Transport Canada is leading a review on Canoe Pass marine navigation and Westham Island bridge operations and have been advised the review process is being conducted with TransLink and the Vancouver Port Authority.

As a stakeholder, the Delta Farmers Institute wishes to participate in the engagement process and respectfully submits the following requests for consideration:

1. Marine traffic is closed to navigation through the swing span of the bridge until mitigation measures satisfy the needs of the Westham Island farm businesses; this would include restrictions on vessel size and weight allowance, and
2. TransLink implements protective pilings, independent of the bridge, to improve safety and protect the bridge from further vessel impacts.

We recognize the importance of maintaining marine access for First Nations.

Below is information to contextualize our request, including the contribution of Westham Island farms to our provincial economy, and early impacts of the bridge closure. Although the bridge is now open, affected farm businesses will be impacted for the remainder of the growing season and beyond.

Agriculture in Delta and Westham Island, BC

The City of Delta is home to some of the most productive farmland in all of Canada. For more than a century, Delta's multi-generational farm families have grown a wide range of food products. Agriculture in Delta is a vital economic contributor, generating an estimated annual \$300 million in farm gate receipts (or 38% of province's gross receipts) and supports the equivalent of 1,500 persons full-time employment. Over 20,000 acres, or 50% of Delta's total land base, is used for farming.

A key component is Westham Island, an area that contributes 2,500 acres of high value crops generating over \$27 million of agricultural product and retail sales. During the peak season, between 3,000-6,000 consumers travel to farms on the island per week. Farms annually produce approximately 13,000 tons of crops that are transported off the island for distribution, requiring use of the Westham Island bridge.

There is significant investment in the future of Westham Island as an economic driver in the community. The City of Delta is designing new irrigation infrastructure, connecting the mainland's water conveyance system to the island. The cost is estimated between \$10-12 million.

In addition to being a significant supplier of food products, farming on Westham Island also provides several social and ecological benefits such as open space and wildlife habitat, which are highly valued by the urban population. The George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary and Alaksen National Wildlife Area provide critical habitat for migratory waterfowl and species at risk. The Alaksen National Wildlife area is an active farm (850 acres), on which DFI members produce a diversity of marketable crops. The George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary is open to the public, and records up 100,000 visitors annually.

Westham Island Bridge and January 2026 closure

The single-lane wooden swing bridge built 116 years ago, serves as the only land transportation corridor connecting the island to the mainland. In 1969 and again on January 20, 2026, the bridge was struck by a barge causing full land access closure to the island. In 1969, a Bailey bridge was used as a temporary solution but its use was not possible in 2026. The transportation of materials by barge through the swing bridge is a high-risk operation due to deep water, swift currents and changing tides that inevitably result in risk of damage to the bridge.

There are significant consequences from the January 20 bridge strike, as the closure extended into a 10-week period, leaving farmers without the ability to transport their product via land. This closure had the ability to cause immediate and lasting impacts to our provincial supply chains and food security. Seed suppliers, transporters, and key supporting businesses were impeded, creating a multiplier effect throughout the agricultural sector.

Without the swift action taken by the City of Delta, Translink and the Province of BC to provide commercial barge transport for farm goods, businesses on Westham Island would have ceased to operate. Even with the coordinated efforts of our local and provincial governments, which were greatly appreciated, individual farm operators absorbed additional financial costs for labour and resources to sustain operations.

If the closure had occurred during planting, growing and harvesting season, the consequences to farm operations would have been irreversible, effectively causing operations to shut down, and resulting in market shortages. If crops cannot be planted, harvested and marketed, contracts and customers would be lost and not renewed. The impact to our provincial food security because of closing farm businesses would be acute.

Next Steps

Given the economic contributions of farming on Westham Island and the risk associated with opening the swing span to marine vessels, we believe the future of the Westham Island bridge operations must be prioritized for vehicle traffic. Marine vessels have alternate route options; farmers do not. The assurance of secured land access with the Westham Island bridge has never been more important for supporting food security, the livelihood of families, and sustaining local businesses.

We look forward to an opportunity to participate in the Canoe Pass marine navigation review process in a more formal capacity, and for further discussion on the requests of our members outlined in this submission. Our directors are available to engage with the Ministry of Transport at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Hugh Reynolds
President

CC: Hon. Steven MacKinnon, Minister of Transport Canada
Hon. Health MacDonad, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Hon. Lana Popham, BC Minister of Agriculture and Food
Hon. Mike Farnworth, BC Minister of Transportation and Transit
Kevin Quinn, CEO TransLink
Peter Xotta, Vancouver Port Authority (Port of Vancouver)
Mayor & Council, City of Delta
Ian Paton, MLA Delta South
Peter Weeber, City Manager, City of Delta

About the Delta Farmers Institute (DFI)

The Delta Farmers Institute (DFI) was established in 1898 and represents over 170 members of the farming community in Delta, BC. Over 90% of our farms are family owned and operated by multi-generational families on large parcels of farmland with some of the best soils and climate for agriculture in Canada.