



Public Notice

Subject: Howe Island Township East 3-Car Ferry Breakdown & Ice Conditions

Background:

On Saturday, March 22, 2025, the Howe Island Township East 3-Car Ferry experienced a significant mechanical failure involving the main drive wheel and shaft. At the time, the ferry was navigating through several acres of **drift ice**. Fortunately, there were no vehicles or passengers on board—only the operator was present.

Municipal staff accessed the ferry from the mainland using a small boat, and the operator was safely removed due to the hazardous conditions. The drifting ice exerted enormous pressure on the cable, pushing everything downriver. A tugboat was deployed to assist and successfully guided the ferry to shore on the mainland side.

Key Facts:

- **Drift ice is extremely powerful** and can be highly destructive when propelled by wind and momentum. Different types of ice—such as **bay ice** and **shale ice**—vary in strength and impact. It is common to see damage to docks and shorelines following the spring ice breakup.
- Township ferry operations have been **challenged by significant ice conditions** this winter, increasing stress on the ferry, its cable, and the drive system.
- While staff are committed to maintaining ferry operations, the **3-car ferry has been pushed beyond typical operating expectations** due to these extreme conditions.
- **Public frustration is understandable** when ferry delays occur. However, directing frustration toward frontline ferry staff is neither helpful nor productive. Unless you have experience operating the ferry, understanding its capabilities, and assessing real-time ice conditions, directing staff on operations is not beneficial.
- **To prevent unnecessary high-risk situations**, municipal ferry staff have been instructed to **avoid drifting ice and allow it to pass before crossing**. While this decision may not always seem necessary from a passenger's perspective, the Township prioritizes safety in all operational decisions.

Going Forward:

The ferry staff will **continue prioritizing safety**—reducing risk, protecting the public, and preserving ferry equipment. This cautious approach will remain in effect as the **Howe Island East 3-Car Ferry** continues operations.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.