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I wholeheartedly support Councillor Burnside's motion to bring increased access to the Toronto Islands. Recent ferry outages highlight the growing problems of accessing the Toronto Islands and the need to build alternative public access. Just two weeks ago, two of the city's ferries, with a combined capacity of over 1700 passengers, were declared indefinitely inoperable; this has left three ferries, with a combined capacity of only around 1200 passengers, to pick up the slack. The resultant messaging of using water taxis to access a public space is frustrating and unacceptable. This latest issue is just the latest episode in a series of problems plaguing the ferries and their long-promised replacements, underscoring the need for alternative public access.

Accessing the Toronto Islands is a fundamental part of enjoying summer in this city - it's the closest thing that tens of thousands of Torontonians will have to a cottage. Even before the recent ferry outages, they were inaccessible for non-residents. With frequent outages and steep fares, they help ensure that the Islands remain inaccessible. Councillor Burnside and I note that the east part of Ward's Island is only 250 metres from the Port Lands, creating the possibility for a year-round access point. Building a bridge would be a fraction of the cost of the new electric ferries, would provide access to the Islands for everyone, and would ensure that emergency services have a reliable year-round link to the area.

As it stands, the ferry replacement program is expensive and delayed. It has incurred over \$9 million in costs before any ferries have been built and each vessel is estimated to cost around \$25 million dollars, not including ongoing consulting fees and shore-side infrastructure upgrades. It is also behind schedule - the target entry date for the first electric ferry is now late 2026, over a decade after the contract was awarded. Before incurring more costs and delays, we urge the City to look into building year-round access to the Islands.

I recognize that Toronto Island residents are proud of their unique neighbourhood and enjoy its tranquility while being so close to the city. I know that this process would have to happen with their consultation, but the facts are clear - we need a reliable and safe link from the mainland to the islands that all people can enjoy year round.

Ferries are protecting privilege by guaranteeing the Islands' continued isolation. As public frustration builds, it is time to pursue an alternative to accessing the Islands before promising more money to the constantly-ballooning costs of the ferry replacement project.

Sincerely



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