

February 14, 2023

Mr. Parm Bains
Member of Parliament, Steveston-Richmond East
230-11331 Coppersmith Way
Richmond, BC V7A 5J9

By Email: parm.bains@parl.gc.ca

Dear Mr. Bains,

Re: Local Channel Dredging

Further to my letter of June 9, 2022 on the issue of local channel dredging, I was pleased to see that a working group has been re-established to help focus efforts to move the issue forward with senior government agencies. A collaborative approach is critical to resolving this long-standing issue.

I understand that you are preparing a submission to the province seeking long-term funding for a regional dredging strategy. You may wish to refer to the joint letter from myself, Mayor Malcolm Brodie, Chief Ken Baird and Chief Wayne Sparrow which was sent to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Premier John Horgan in June 2021 (copy attached).

From Delta's perspective, the dredging issue continues to be a high priority, with increasing urgency as each freshet passes. I will be meeting with provincial officials in Victoria in the next few weeks to, once again, highlight the need for funding and a strategic plan for dredging the local channels around the lower Fraser River.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact my office at 604-946-3210.

Yours truly,

George V. Harvie
Mayor

Enclosure

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cc: Chief Laura Cassidy, Tsawwassen First Nation
Chief Wayne Sparrow, Musqueam Indian Band
The Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and
Disability Inclusion and MP for Delta
The Hon. Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing and MLA Delta North
Ian Paton, MLA Delta South
Delta Council
Sean McGill, City Manager



June 17, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable John Horgan
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Prime Minister and Premier,

Re: Local Channel Dredging in the Lower Fraser River

As elected leaders of our respective communities, we are writing collectively to both levels of senior government to request, as a matter of some urgency, collaborative action to resolve a long-standing problem that impacts all of our communities – Fraser River sediment - and the need for a sustainable dredging program to mitigate the economic, social and environmental impacts that occur when it is allowed to accumulate and block important local waterways.

There is a long and complex backdrop to this issue, involving Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, the Province of BC, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Transport Canada, and the various local harbour authorities and community groups that have formed to advocate for action on dredging. A collaborative effort is required to resolve this issue since jurisdictional responsibility for local channel dredging is unclear; there is no comprehensive plan for maintaining the local channels of the lower Fraser River; and there is no dedicated funding.

In 2013, the cities of Delta and Richmond, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (VFPA) and the Province of BC came together in an unprecedented \$10 million collaboration to dredge the secondary channels around Ladner and Steveston. These channels provide access to businesses, marinas, and float home communities, and it is critically important that the channels are maintained in a safe and navigable condition.

The initial dredging effort undertaken in 2014-15 was successful in restoring the local channels to pre-1990 levels. Since then, VFPA has been using residual funding to undertake 'spot' dredging in some of the channels; however, funding is now exhausted and the program is complete.

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In the meantime, the natural sedimentation processes of the Fraser River are continuing and, after this year's freshet, the local channels will have received another significant deposit of sediment. Without further action, we will soon be back to square one and emergency dredging will be needed to address critical situations as they arise.

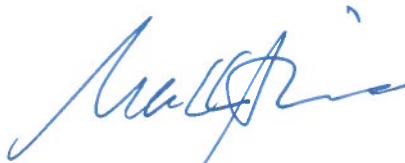
Preliminary estimates of the costs to dredge the priority channels in the lower Fraser River are under \$2 million annually. We recognize the environmental sensitivity around dredging these channels, which are critical habitat for many species of fish, including salmon and sturgeon, and steps must be taken to ensure fish and their habitat are protected to the greatest extent possible.

This issue will not go away and, year over year, it will only get worse. It is time to come together and address this matter once and for all.

Yours truly,



Mayor George V. Harvie
City of Delta



Mayor Malcolm Brodie
City of Richmond



Chief Ken Baird
Tsawwassen First Nation



Chief Wayne Sparrow
Musqueam Indian Band

cc: The Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
The Hon. Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation
Ian Paton, MLA Delta South
Robin Silvester, President and Chief Executive Officer, VFPA
Delta Council
Sean McGill, City Manager

Local Channel Dredging

The Need for a Long-Term Sustainable Plan



A Collaborative Approach

The City of Delta is seeking support from the City of Richmond, Musqueam Indian Band, and Tsawwassen First Nation to ask the provincial and federal governments to work with local stakeholders to develop a regulatory framework and funding model for a long-term, sustainable solution for local channel dredging in the Lower Fraser River.

In 2013, the Province, City of Delta, City of Richmond and VFPA entered into a \$10 million joint funding agreement to undertake dredging in the local channels around Ladner and Steveston. The 2014/15 program restored many of the local channels to pre-1990 depths, and 'spot dredging' was undertaken throughout 2018-21 to maintain areas of high sediment accumulation. The funding is now fully spent.

Over the past several years, Delta has made significant efforts to find a long-term solution to the local channel dredging issue, including meetings with federal officials in Ottawa and provincial officials in Victoria, as well as with local stakeholders including the Fraser River Residential and Commercial Working Group, and the Fraser River Industrial Association.

Despite this:

- Jurisdictional responsibility for local channel dredging remains unclear.
- There is no dedicated funding source.
- There is no comprehensive, long-term plan for maintaining the secondary channels of the Lower Fraser River.
- The permitting process is protracted and uncertain.
- Sediment continues to accumulate in the secondary channels.

Attachment: Backgrounder



LOCAL CHANNEL DREDGING - THE NEED FOR A SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM

There is an urgent need to address the jurisdictional and financial responsibilities for dredging of the secondary channels in the lower Fraser River. Delta is committed to working with the Federal and Provincial Governments and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to develop a sustainable dredging plan. The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority has agreed to administer the program. Delta is seeking financial support from the Federal and Provincial Governments for this critical initiative.

SINCE THE LATE 1990S, THERE HAS BEEN NO MANDATED AUTHORITY TO MANAGE SECONDARY RIVER CHANNELS

In the 1990s, responsibility for dredging the main navigational channels of the Fraser River was transferred from the Canadian Coast Guard to the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority. This left a jurisdictional vacuum, with no agency specifically mandated to manage the secondary channels, and no identified source of funding.



Grounded boat mid-channel

SEDIMENT ACCUMULATION IMPACTS

Twenty years of sediment accumulation in the secondary channels was significantly impacting commercial, recreational and residential activities along the river. River sediment was allowed to accumulate in the local river channels around Delta for more than 20 years, creating a significant navigational hazard and severely impacting commercial and recreational activities along the river. With these activities accounting for more than \$51 million in direct economic output, there is a significant economic impact associated with the failure to dredge. Ladner Harbour is one of 1,170 small craft harbours owned by DFO and is included in the 750 considered to be core harbours that are critical to fishing and aquaculture industries.



Canoe Pass Float Home Community at Low Tide

WHAT ARE SECONDARY RIVER CHANNELS?

Secondary river channels are local navigation routes that lead from the main shipping channel of a river. In Delta, there are several secondary channels that provide access from the main river to Ladner Harbour, float home communities, fisheries, marinas, and numerous local businesses.

COLLABORATION FOR A TEMPORARY SOLUTION

Community concern had been building for several years and access to the local channels was significantly impaired when, in December 2012, following several years of lobbying, the Corporation of Delta entered into a joint \$10 million funding program with the Provincial government, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority and the City of Richmond to dredge the local channels around Ladner and Steveston. This was an unprecedented step for Delta, since local governments have no legislated responsibility for dredging. Delta's \$2 million contribution encouraged similar funding from senior governments which have jurisdiction over river dredging. At the same time, Fisheries and Oceans Canada dredged Ladner Harbour through the Small Craft Harbours program.

WHY SO MUCH SEDIMENT?

The Fraser River is British Columbia's largest river, flowing 1,400 km and draining one quarter of the landscape.

It carries 20 million tonnes of sediment annually to the Fraser River delta. In the 1990s, Transport Canada placed diversions at critical locations along the lower Fraser River to divert more water into the deep-sea shipping navigational channels and to reduce the need for dredging. The project was successful in that it saved millions of dollars in dredging expenditures; however, it came at the expense of the local channels which were inundated with silt that has dramatically reduced water depths.

OCEAN DISPOSAL FEES LIMIT THE SCOPE OF DREDGING

The dredging program was completed in February 2015, with approximately 400,000 cubic metres of sediment removed from the three most heavily used channels. Ocean disposal fees of \$200,000 were paid to Fisheries and Oceans Canada, further limiting the scope of the project.

A LONG-TERM SOLUTION IS NEEDED

Without ongoing maintenance dredging, the secondary channels will continue to accumulate sediment and will eventually reach another critical point when a major dredging effort will once again be required.

A SUSTAINABLE DREDGING PLAN FOR FOR DELTA

A hydrological study from 2010 concluded that 48,000 cubic metres of sediment needs to be removed from the secondary

channels each year to ensure they remain navigable for local

traffic. At a dredging cost of \$15 per cubic metre, the maintenance dredging program would cost approximately \$750,000 per year.

Delta would like to engage in meaningful discussion with the Federal and Provincial Governments to ensure all parties contribute funding, and with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority which has agreed to manage the program at no cost as part of its broader dredging program. Annual channel soundings from the Canadian Coast Guard will be used to determine priority areas for dredging, and dredging may not be necessary every year. In this event, the funding will be allowed to accumulate for future use. The Canadian government is urged to:

- Confirm which Federal ministry has jurisdiction for secondary channel dredging;
- Provide permanent annual funding for dredging local channels;
- Provide an exemption from ocean disposal fees for sediment dredged from local channels; and
- Confirm that the Canadian Coast Guard will continue to fund annual surveys of secondary channels.



MULTIPLE ACCOUNTS EVALUATION

A study commissioned by Delta in 2012 (Multiple Accounts Evaluation: Dredging Ladner Harbour and Related River Channels, InterVistas Consulting) concluded that there is a strong business case for dredging Ladner Harbour and surrounding river channels, which would result in positive economic, environmental, and social impacts for the community. Economic activity in these areas has a significant impact for the region, including:



200 direct jobs
equivalent to 180
person years of FTE
employment



\$6 million in Direct
Wages



\$11 million in Direct
GDP



\$39 million in Direct
Economic Output



\$1.7 million in Federal
Tax Revenues



\$750,000 in Provincial
Tax Revenues



\$320,000 in Municipal
Tax Revenues

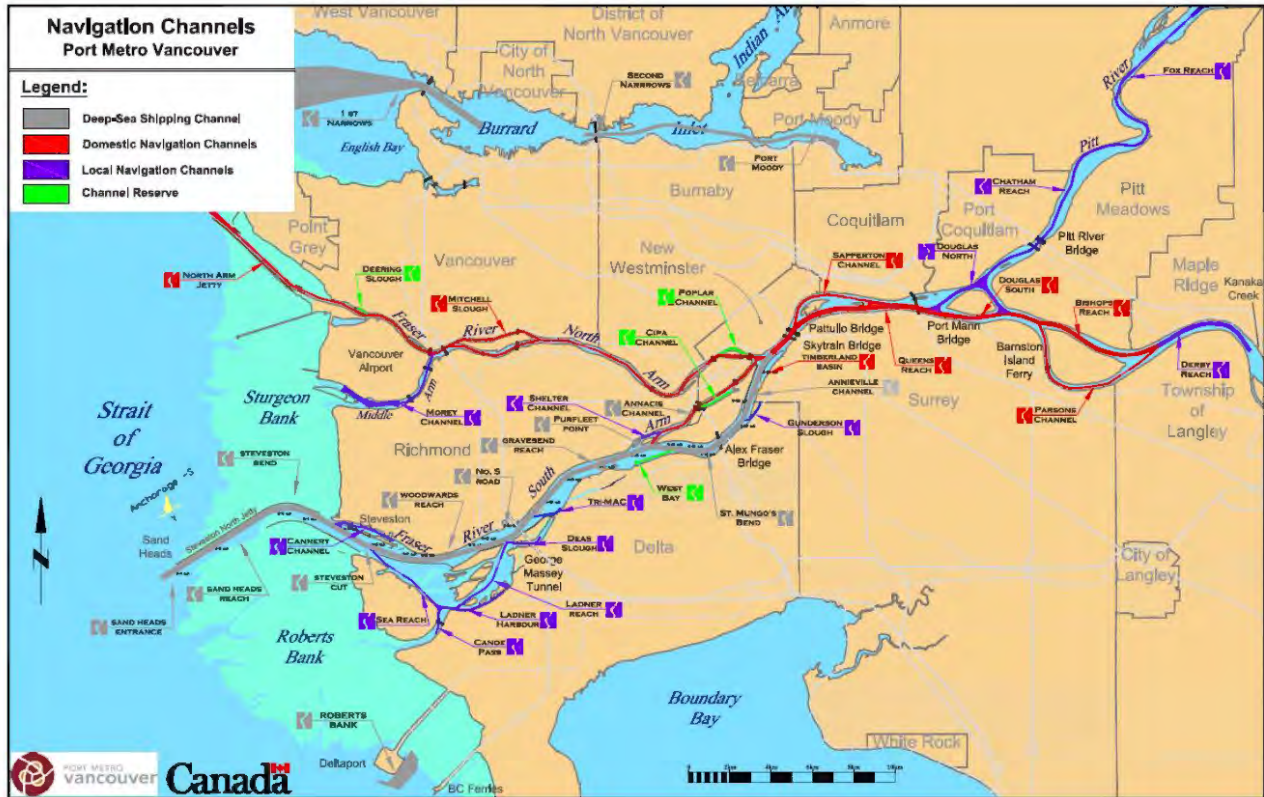
ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES TO MAINTENANCE DREDGING?

In 2010, a comprehensive hydrological modelling study (Hay & Company Consultants) was undertaken to see what could be done to reduce the amount of sediment being deposited in the local channels, thereby reducing the amount of maintenance dredging that needs to take place. Three mitigating options were modelled in detail (involving, for example, the construction of wingdams, infilling between islands and the construction of training walls) all of which would be successful in reducing sediment deposit in the local channels. However, the estimated capital costs associated with implementing the mitigation projects and the modelled benefit from the projects are not worthwhile when compared with maintenance dredging alone.

Periodic maintenance dredging is the most sustainable and economical solution to manage the siltation problem in Ladner Reach, Sea Reach, Canoe Pass and Deas Slough, and prevent further loss of fish habitat.



VANCOUVER FRASER PORT AUTHORITY NAVIGATION CHANNELS



DELTA SECONDARY RIVER CHANNELS

