

A4 The Delta Optimist April 2, 2026

# Westham Island Bridge re-opens, to the relief of residents

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After a two-month plus closure, the Westham Island Bridge re-opened to vehicle traffic on Saturday night, March 28.

TransLink, which owns the bridge, informed Westham Island residents and businesses on Thursday night.

According to TransLink, during the past 67 days, crews have been working around the clock to repair the bridge as safely and efficiently as possible.

Repairs have included installation of a temporary pier, removal of the damaged pier materials, rehabilitation of the bridge deck, and construction of a new pier, which involved pile driving and installing large structural support beams. TransLink says some critical repair



JIM KINNEAR PHOTO

**Gordon Ellis, a multi-generational Westham Island farmer, made a ceremonial crossing by tractor, on Sunday afternoon, March 29, underscoring the bridge's significance to local agriculture and daily life on the island.**

work will continue in the coming weeks to stabilize

remove the temporary pier, and add more steel reinforcements.

"The navigation channel remains closed to

marine traffic while this is an active construction site," said TransLink in a news release.

"There may also be intermittent times when the swing span must open to allow crews to safely access specific areas and complete the remaining work. These openings will last around 15 minutes at a time and will be scheduled overnight to minimize further disruptions to the community."

Following the closure of the bridge to all traffic due to a vessel strike on the evening of Jan. 20, the City of Delta and TransLink, joined forces to support residents and businesses on Westham Island.

While repairs were made, the province and TransLink supported the continued transport of essential goods.

The province supported the City of Delta by reimbursing eligible transport costs of goods to and from the island that are related

to public health, safety, urgent animal welfare and provincial food security.

TransLink provided funding to the City of Delta through its local government funding programs to support effective goods movement.

"It was a lot of biting finger nails the past few weeks, but I'm pretty happy for the community of Westham Island, especially the farmers and the businesses," said Mayor George Harvie.

"I'm very proud of how Delta stepped up immediately, especially on the barge and goods movements, getting people on and off the island. It was a lot of work, but I'm very proud of our staff working alongside TransLink to get it done as soon as possible.

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## Everyone stepped up

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"Hats off to all the workers who were working on all the repairs in the terrible weather conditions."

Harvie said all of the agencies involved will come together for a de-brief to discuss what went right, what went wrong and lessons learned.

In terms of the investigation into the marine company that hit the bridge in the first place, Harvie said he will now ask Delta staff to give their attention to that aspect.

"When this was happening, we put it off to the side because the first priority was to focus on getting the bridge back in operation," he said.

"That will be the next step, looking to recover costs. I want to thank the province again for providing funding to us, but we need to work through our Member of Parliament to see if we can get a quick resolution.

"The question I will also be pushing through the TransLink Mayor's Council is how we can get a new replacement bridge

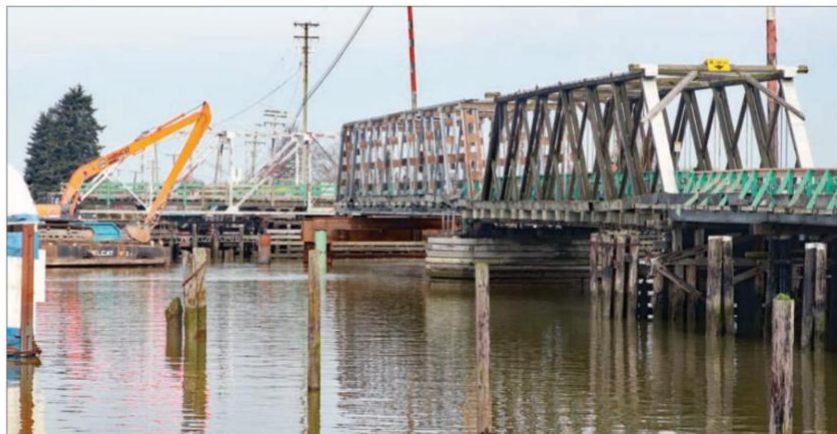
built as soon as possible."

Delta South Conservative MLA Ian Paton, who is the Conservative Party's agriculture critic, said he is thrilled for the farming community.

"It's great news. I have relatives and grand-kids that live on Westham Island. It has been a huge inconvenience for not only people who need to go to work or get to school, but it has massive implications to our agricultural community," said Paton.

"People have no idea how much agriculture and farming there is on Westham Island. All these farmers have thought outside of the box to be able to continue their farming operations and retail sales off of the island.

"Everyone stepped up in a big way. Certainly to the City of Delta, but kudos also the Agriculture Ministry for making sure we did what we could for the farmers. It could have been a lot worse. Everybody stepped up to the plate to bring this to an end ... thank goodness."



**Delta Coun. Jessie Dosanjh, Mayor George Harvie, MP Jill McKnight, MLA Ian Paton, Councillors Dylan Kruger, Rod Binder, Daniel Boisvert, Jennifer Johal, school trustee Nick Kanakos and Gordon Ellis celebrate opening of Westham Island Bridge.**

JIM KINNEAR PHOTO



## Safety Patrol Fraser Lifeboat

Fraser Lifeboat conducted a Good Friday safety patrol for the Easter long weekend. A few pleasure boats were out but mostly commercial. We also saw our first LNG tanker in the river.



## DELTA Lifeboat Annual Southern Straits Yacht Race Safety Patrol



Yacht Club. The skyline of Vancouver lighted by the moon gave the crew some beautiful scenery.

On Friday morning the Delta weighed anchor and transited to the start line at Dunderave Pier, at the north side of English Bay. Delta Lifeboat arrived at 0945 hours as the participating sailboats were preparing themselves for the start of the race; 1000 hours. One after the other, groups of sailboats departed for their one of three chosen race course. Delta Lifeboat moved with the majority of the sailing fleet to Sisters Islets, the long course that would continue during the night. The crew was divided into 2 watches, 4 hours on and 4 hours off. The weather was rough with 3-foot waves and a south easterly wind of 15-20 knots. All the sailboats were able to hoist their spinnakers giving the onlookers and Delta Lifeboat crew a beautiful view. It was also a good steering training for the crew with the following seas pushing the vessel to port and starboard.

At 1633 hours the first yachts were already rounding Sisters Islets so it was decided to turn around for Ballenas Islands to anchor in the bay for dinner. The Delta Lifeboat ploughed through 4-foot waves, 22 knot winds and the bow was regularly slamming on the water. At 1810 hours the Delta Lifeboat anchored at Ballenas Island and a perfect roast dinner was served. During the night a 4-hour rotations continued with a radio watch; no issues were reported. Since all the yachts had AIS they were t easy to track on the chart plotter.



On Saturday morning, before breakfast, 0800 hours, the majority of the yachts had already crossed the finish line. The weather changed completely, sunshine, calm and flat sea and a few knots winds. Delta Lifeboat weighed anchor after breakfast and proceeded back to Ladner Lifeboat Station. When Nanaimo was at the starboard beam a radio call for assistance was heard from a small vessel with engine problems. As the broken-down vessel was close to a marina the Delta Lifeboat did not respond and continued its journey. Again, north of Sand Heads, a pod of orcas was observed. One very surfacing very close to the Delta Lifeboat. All required

precautions were taken to not impede the pods travel. At 1410 hours the Delta Lifeboat arrived at the Lifeboat station. It was a good, safe deployment and a very good training opportunity for the new crew working in rough sea conditions.

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## 2026 - Annual RCYC Safety Event

On April 10th, the Royal City Yacht Club hosted its Annual Safety Event, this time, at the Marina at Hampton Cove. The event saw a fantastic turnout with 12 boats participating. In addition to the boat attendees, a remarkable crowd arrived by land. We estimated about 70 people attended, creating a vibrant and lively atmosphere.



The day kicked off with boat inspections at 11 a.m., followed by a potluck lunch at 12:30 p.m., which was a standout—an incredible assortment of dishes that everyone enjoyed. A highlight of the event was the swap meet, where attendees brought and exchanged a variety of goods, contributing to a lively trading atmosphere. The event was also a fundraising event for CLI; raising \$895.

Safety was a priority, and we are pleased to report that all 12 boats passed their safety inspections. Notably, out of approximately 40 to 50 fire extinguishers checked, only a few were outdated and needed replacement: a testament to our members' diligence. The weather was cooperative; the rain held off until about 2:30 p.m., allowing us to enjoy a full schedule of activities.



Though I was disappointed that I couldn't address everyone as planned, I want to extend heartfelt thanks. First, to Dave at Hampton Cove—your generosity in letting us use the marina was crucial. Gord Knight from the CLI Team, who provided FREE Fire Extinguisher Inspections and to Don and Lynn McGill: Your constant support—from initial planning and coordination to capturing event photos and documenting donations—has been invaluable. Derek and Tracey, thank you for your dedication—Derek, your year-round efforts, and Tracey, your help with the food, made such a difference. D&D hot dog stand was a huge hit, with 54 hot dogs flying off the grill!



The event spanned from Friday, April 10th (free moorage), through Saturday, April 11th (main event), with Sunday set aside for departures by noon. We are already looking ahead to next year's safety event. Our club is thriving, and I am continually impressed by the dedication of our members. This event is a true highlight on our calendar, and we can't wait to do it all again next year.





# Western Mariner

The Magazine of the Coast

## Mariners' News

### Royal Canadian Navy and Canadian Lifeboat Institution partner on SAR operations during the 2026 Georgia Strait Roe Herring Fishery

By John Horton

The Canadian Lifeboat Institution's DELTA LIFEBOAT 1B-02 was again deployed as a SAR support vessel for the 2026 roe herring fishery in the Strait of Georgia and this year, following a request from the Royal Canadian Navy, three junior navy officers joined the CLI crew for additional training and sea time.

Beginning Sunday March 1st, the RCN members and CLI crew conducted training and exercises while on alert for calls for assistance from the fishing fleet. Training covered navigation, steering, lookout and officer of the watch duties, radio work and log keeping. Exercises included towing, firefighting, vessel dewatering, operating the lifeboat's rubber boat, conducting search patterns, use of the line gun and general ship handling.

During the fishery, the DELTA LIFEBOAT crew responded to two requests for medical assistance. The first for a semi-conscious fisherman who was transported to Deep Bay aboard his own high-speed fishing vessel.



Stretcher transfer of fisherman from the DELTA LIFEBOAT to the CCG CAPE COCKBURN.

The second was more serious. A semi-conscious fisherman collapsed on the deck of a gillnet herring punt, face down in the fish, and a spinal injury was suspected by his crew. The LIFEBOAT arrived in 15 minutes and secured alongside the punt in dark, rough conditions and two crew members boarded the

punt, which had its net only partially aboard. After conducting an assessment, the fisherman was secured in a clamshell stretcher and transferred to the LIFEBOAT where further assessment of his vitals was made and a warming process begun to counter hypothermia.

The Joint Rescue Coordination Centre tasked the Coast Guard Lifeboat out of French Creek to join them while they transited from the Northeast side of Hornby Island to Shingle Spit. There, in calmer water CCG CAPE COCKBURN and DELTA LIFEBOAT were able to come alongside each other for a patient transfer and his ultimately delivery to Deep Bay and hospital.

During this rescue CLI, Navy and Coast Guard crews worked well together and their joint training came to the fore.

On Sunday the 8th fishing halted temporarily due to bad weather and the DELTA LIFEBOAT took the opportunity to reposition and top up fuel in Comox. That evening an announcement from DFO indicated fishing would restart off Nanoose (gillnetters still had 4,000 tons of quota to catch), and DELTA departed Comox, arriving at Nanoose at 0130.

Although no further incidents occurred during the fishery, several signals were received from fishing vessels thanking CLI for their role. The Navy crew left the vessel in Nanaimo on Wednesday 11th and three additional CLI crew members joined from Tsawwassen, keeping the DELTA LIFEBOAT at full strength. We were sorry to see the Navy contingent depart as a strong bond had developed between both crews.



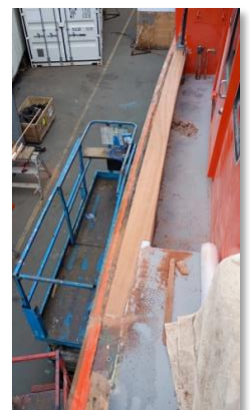
Some of the SAR crew aboard the DELTA LIFEBOAT during the roe herring fishery (left to right): Ken Lewis, CLI member; Len Cheveldave, CLI member; Sub-Lieutenant Aflaki, Royal Canadian Navy; Sub-Lieutenant Dinatale, Royal Canadian Navy; Ron Vanderzwan, CLI member; Sub-Lieutenant Bancolita, Royal Canadian Navy.

The fishery officially closed on Friday March 13th and the LIFEBOAT returned to Delta. It is anticipated that with the success of this deployment the partnership between the RCN and CLI will continue, with anticipated benefits for both services.

John Horton is Senior Coxswain on the DELTA LIFEBOAT 1B-02. [canadianlifeboatinstitution.org](http://canadianlifeboatinstitution.org)

## Delta Lifeboat Refit

On Tuesday April 7, directly after the Easter weekend, the Delta Lifeboat moved to Shelter Island for its yearly refit. An impression of all the work done by our dedicated volunteers can be seen below.





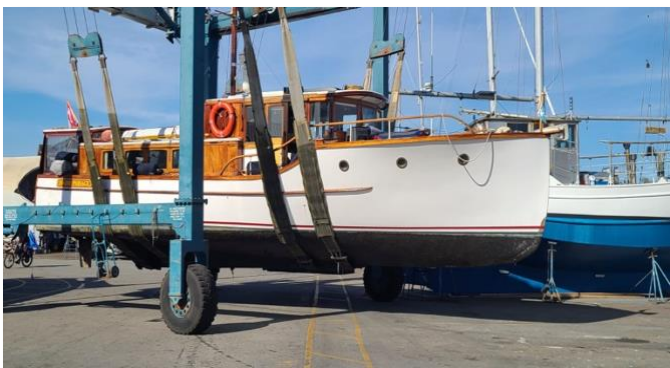
## Towing - A Crew Members Experience

AHOY Shipmates,

While recovering from ankle surgery, I continued planning the engine replacement for our boat. This involved spending significant time in the engine room rewiring the 12-volt system to connect new lithium batteries and to prepare for the large 48-volt lithium batteries and the e-motor that will serve as the new engine. Finally, the time had come to make the change.

On Sunday April 19, with the assistance of our friend Dale, Wendy and I (Ken) left False Creek (our home base) and headed south to Steveston to haul out. Crossing the mouth of the North Arm of the Fraser, we encountered a strong ebb current. This current, combined with a 20-knot northwest wind, created rather boisterous "wind-against-tide waves" for about 200 meters. Once past the breakwater, the seas smoothed out for the ride to Sand Heads. I was concerned about what we would find on arrival, but the wind had abated to about 5kn, so there were

relatively few waves as we entered the main channel of the Fraser. Heading across to the south side of the channel to keep out of the strong ebb current, we saw a sailboat ahead with someone vigorously waving to us, obviously needing assistance. Following CLI training, I assessed the situation before coming alongside. Two people were on board: a man and his wife. It appears their engine had died near Steveston, and the current had swept them downriver, threatening to carry them into open water. They were asking for a tow back to Steveston, probably to the fuel dock to try to solve the problem. They also had no working VHF to call for assistance. However, they were wearing PFD's.



We carry a tow line just in case we need one. Now we were the ones providing the tow. Since our dinghy is in davits across our stern, with no towing post, I was in a bit of a quandary about how to secure a tow. I briefly considered a Liverpool tow, but with no trained crew aboard, I decided to use a cleat on our starboard transom, with the line passing under the dinghy's bow. After crossing the T, we passed the line and slowly pulled ahead while paying out the line. Just as the strain came on the line, and they started to fall in behind, a vibration started in our boat, that increased as I increased the engine revolutions. Having never towed anything before, I was uncertain if the tow was causing the vibration, or what else could cause it. While watching the tow line and changing revolutions, I determined the problem wasn't the tow; it was internal. Stopping the tow, I tried pulsing forward and reverse revolutions, which reduced the vibrations.

However, we noticed that the bilge pump was running for 40 seconds every two minutes!

We continued towing upriver against the strong ebb current, shortening up the tow once inside Steveston Harbour. Since the fuel dock was full, we carried on to the Britannia Shipyard dock, which was wide open. With the yacht still in tow astern, I slowly brought both boats alongside and secured each one. The owner was very appreciative of the rescue and asked how he could reimburse us. I replied there were two things he could do. One was to ensure he would always render assistance if he encountered another vessel in need. The other was to join CLI as an active crew member, to learn more seamanship skills. Both the wife and owner were very enthusiastic in their assurances that they would join.

With the bilge pump still running, we continued to Strait Marine, where we found temporary moorage while awaiting a lift scheduled



for Monday morning. When we lifted, it was obvious that a crab trap line had wrapped around the propeller, leaving a metallic scratch across one of the blades. However, nothing metallic was found in the line, which was puzzling. We were still puzzled about the source of the water leak. Eventually we found two loose bolts on the strut, which will need to be re-bedded and tightened. Now the engine replacement can continue.

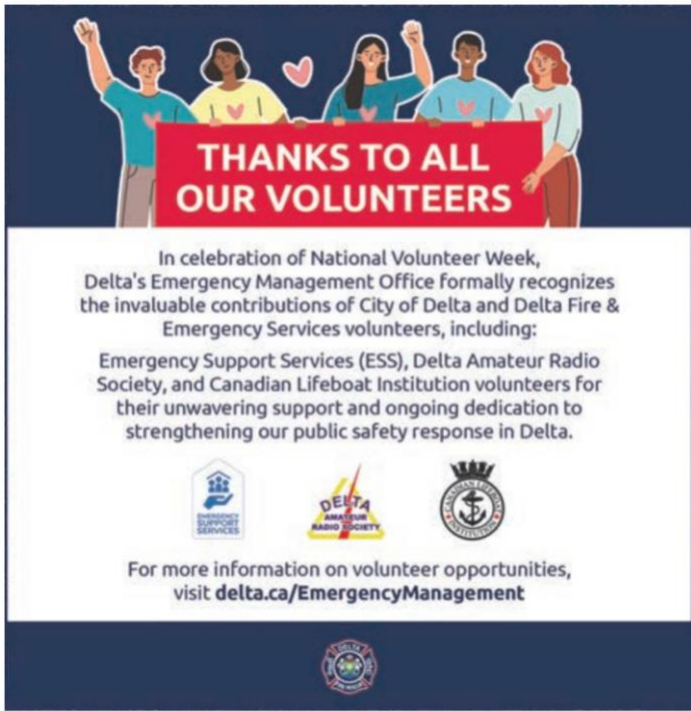
We are now stripping the engine to a manageable size so it can fit out the wheelhouse door, which is only 22 inches wide. It's going to be fun. I am looking forward to rejoining the Delta crew when my surgeon clears me for sea time, and when we are back in the water.

## Fraser Lifeboat PanPan Response

Saturday April 18. Fraser Lifeboat answered a call from Coast Guard Radio of a sailboat aground in the shallow area across from S4. We departed from S19 at a speed of 17.5 knots, Richard as Coxswain in training for the incident. North Shore RCMP RHIB was on scene and advised they were firmly aground. We spotted the vessel and made way toward the site while testing the depth. The hovercraft Moytel came on scene and advised us to hold position while they determined if a tow was possible. Moytel crew boarded the sailboat and determined they would help set the anchor so that the sailboat could get off at a higher tide. The tide was just nearing the bottom of a steep drop. Moytel called us and thanked us for our assistance, but released us as not much else could be done at this point. Fraser Lifeboat headed back to Steveston.




April 23, Edition: Highlighting 'Volunteer Week'



**THANKS TO ALL  
OUR VOLUNTEERS**

In celebration of National Volunteer Week, Delta's Emergency Management Office formally recognizes the invaluable contributions of City of Delta and Delta Fire & Emergency Services volunteers, including:

Emergency Support Services (ESS), Delta Amateur Radio Society, and Canadian Lifeboat Institution volunteers for their unwavering support and ongoing dedication to strengthening our public safety response in Delta.



For more information on volunteer opportunities, visit [delta.ca/EmergencyManagement](http://delta.ca/EmergencyManagement)



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## National Day of Mourning

On Tuesday April 28 the Fraser Lifeboat departed to participate in this yearly Richmond, National Day of Mourning Ceremony at the Garry Point Fisherman's Memorial. Fraser Lifeboat anchored off the shore at the west side of the Steveston Harbour entrance with a bow and stern anchor. At 1100 the MC Kelvin Higo started the ceremony by welcoming everyone. Bagpiper Jack Beetstra played "Going Home" followed by the Fraser Lifeboat piping "the Still" (this is to call all hands to attention as a mark of respect and to order silence).

This was followed by laying of the wreaths/flowers by dignitaries and guests. Brian laid flowers on behalf of the CLI. When the wreaths and flowers were all laid the Fraser Lifeboat rang "8 Bells", signifying the end of the crew members watch, followed by a moment of silence. Then the Fraser Lifeboat piped "Carry On" which was followed by a speech from Richmond Mayor Brodie and WorkSafe BC Nathaniel Hight at which time the ceremony was concluded. The Fraser Lifeboat weighed anchors and returned to the Lifeboat Station.

