



THE PREMIER

GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

June 3, 2026

The Honourable Steven MacKinnon
Minister of Transport
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6
Via Email: TC.MinisterofTransport-MinistredesTransports.TC@tc.gc.ca

Dear Minister MacKinnon,

We understand that an application has been submitted to the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to reconsider Marine Atlantic's essential service designation, including proposals that could suspend the Argentia route and significantly reduce crossings on the Port aux Basques route in the event of a strike or lockout. Since 2004, the CIRB has designated the Marine Atlantic ferry service as essential to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, reaffirming this determination in 2008. In light of Unifor's recent application to challenge this designation, I am writing to express urgent and significant concern with respect to any potential change in the recognition of Marine Atlantic as an essential service.

Marine Atlantic is a critical supply chain and transportation link, a lifeline for our province. As you know, the ferry service fulfills a constitutional obligation and serves as the primary means of transporting essential supplies, goods, and people between Newfoundland and Labrador and mainland Canada. Its uninterrupted operation is fundamental to the health, safety, and well-being of residents, as well as the economic viability of industries across the province.

A significant amount of food consumed in Newfoundland and Labrador is imported via Marine Atlantic, making food security a critical concern that cannot be overstated. Any disruption to ferry service would have immediate and serious consequences for the availability of food and other essential goods such as pharmaceuticals and other medical supplies, disproportionately impacting vulnerable populations and those in rural and remote communities. Maintaining reliability in this supply chain is not simply an economic issue; it is a matter of public necessity.

In addition, disruptions to Marine Atlantic service would have significant consequences for the province's tourism sector and key export industries, including the fishery and forestry sectors. Tourism operators across Newfoundland and Labrador rely heavily on reliable ferry access for visitors, particularly during the peak summer season, and any reduction in service

would result in lost revenue and broader economic impacts. Similarly, the seafood industry, one of the province's largest employers and a cornerstone of many rural and remote communities, depends on Marine Atlantic to transport the majority of its exports to markets on mainland Canada and beyond. Interruptions to this supply chain would directly affect harvesters, fish plant workers, and associated businesses, placing livelihoods at risk and compounding economic pressures in regions where alternative employment opportunities are limited.

At the same time, I want to acknowledge the important role that unions play in representing workers and advocating for fair and equitable working conditions. Collective bargaining is a cornerstone of our labour relations system, and the contributions of organized labour are vital to a strong and fair economy. It is essential that workers' rights continue to be respected and upheld. However, given Marine Atlantic's fundamental role in sustaining daily life in Newfoundland and Labrador, it is equally critical that its designation as an essential service be maintained. Any reconsideration of this designation would introduce significant risks to supply chains, public health and safety, and economic stability in the province.

I urge the Government of Canada to take all necessary steps to ensure that Marine Atlantic continues to be fully recognized and supported as an essential service. We remain hopeful that a constructive and positive resolution that respects the collective bargaining process while safeguarding the uninterrupted delivery of critical services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador can be achieved.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



HONOURABLE TONY WAKEHAM
Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador
MHA, Stephenville-Port au Port

- cc. The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade,
Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade and One Canadian Economy
The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Jobs and Families
The Honourable Joanne Thompson, Minister of Fisheries

The Honourable John Zerucelli, Secretary of State, Labour
The Honourable Barry Petten, Minister, Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honourable Lela Evans, Minister of Health and Community Services
The Honourable Craig Pardy, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Andrea Barbour, Minister, Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation
The Honourable Mike Goosney, Minister of Labour
The Honourable Loyola O'Driscoll, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture
The Honourable Lin Paddock, Minister, Jobs, Growth and Rural Development
The Honourable Pleaman Forsey, Minister, Forestry, Agriculture and Lands
Carol Anstey, Member of Parliament, Long Range Mountains
Paul Connors, Member of Parliament, Avalon
Philip Earle, Member of Parliament, Labrador
Tom Osborne, Member of Parliament, Cape Spear
Jonathan Rowe, Member of Parliament, Terra Nova – The Peninsulas
Clifford Small, Member of Parliament, Central Newfoundland
Colin Tibbo, Vice President, Service and Innovation, Marine Atlantic