



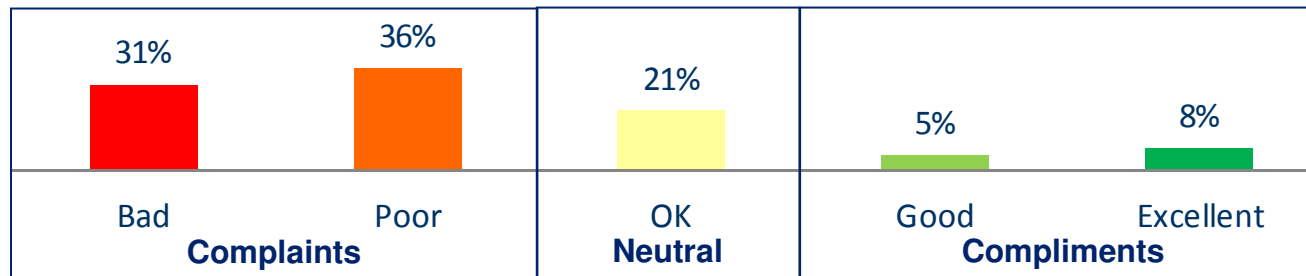
# Complaints Resolution Report Fiscal 2011/2012



# Feedback Summary

- During the 2011/12 fiscal year 20.2 million customers travelled with BC Ferries.
  - BC Ferries received 9,005 comments in 2011/12

**Distribution of Comments by Rating**

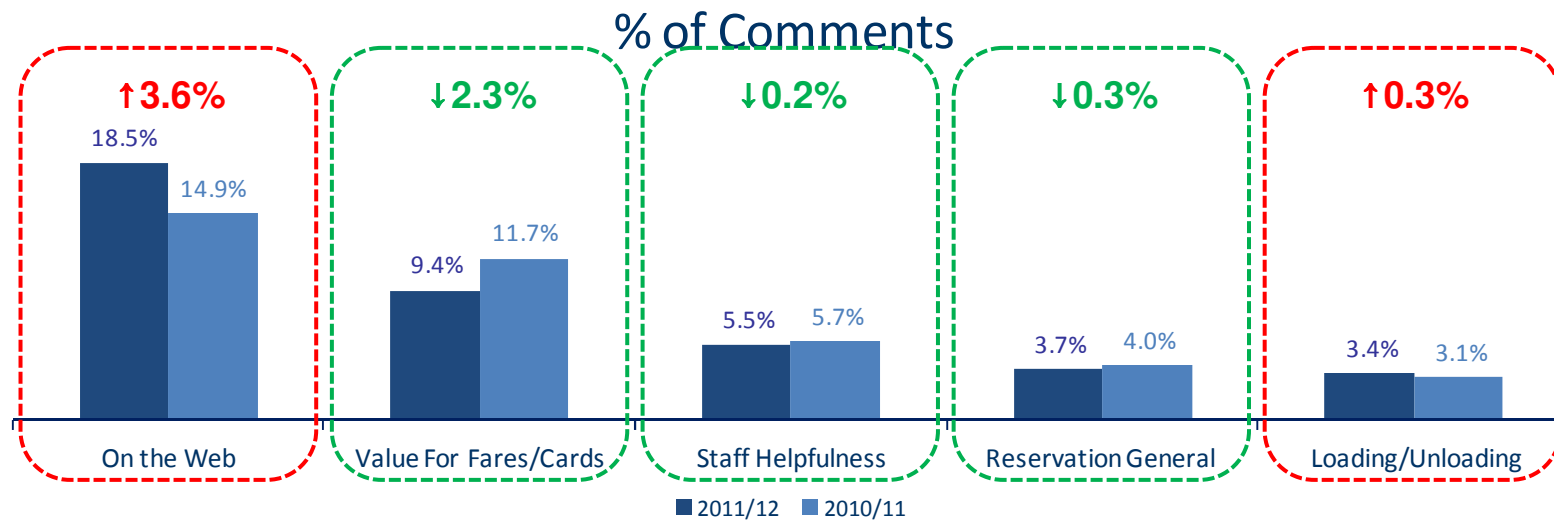


- Customer initiated feedback tends to be negative. Thirteen percent (13%) of all customer feedback received in 2011/12 was complimentary.
- “On the Web” was the top issue: 1665 complaints\* were made, representing 18.5% of the total comments received in 2011/12
  - Top 5 complaints combined represent 41% of all complaints received in 2011/12
- “General” comments are excluded from this analysis:
  - 962 “General” comments were received which were primarily made up of suggestions (350) and company information (285)

\*Complaints = “bad” or “poor” rating accompanied by a comment  
 Note: 2011/12 = April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012

# Top Complaints\*: Corporate

#	Complaint	2011/12		2010/11	
		Complaints*	% of Comments (n=9,005)	Complaints*	% of Comments (n=10,790)
1	On the Web	1,665	18.5%	1612	14.9%
2	Value For Fares/Cards	844	9.4%	1259	11.7%
3	Staff Helpfulness	524	5.5%	616	5.7%
4	Reservation General	329	3.7%	436	4.0%
5	Loading/Unloading	307	3.4%	334	3.1%



\*Complaints = "bad" or "poor" rating accompanied by a comment  
 Note: 2011/12 = April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012  
 2010/11 = April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011

# On The Web

## Sample of Customer Comments:

### Complaints

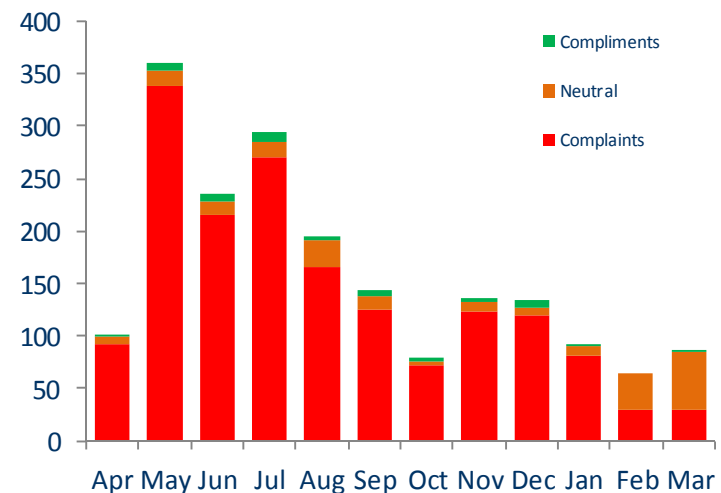
- "I am unable to proceed to checkout as all credit card info is greyed out and cannot be entered."
- "Since your re-launch the site is slow and has lost many scores on usability. Especially for frequent travelers. Please, please review."
- "The website is difficult to navigate and confusing when one is in a hurry to get information. It was poorly designed and very badly thought out."
- "On-line service notices are not kept up to date. Your web server does not appear to be capable of handling the extra use load, as evidenced today with web pages not loading. You are obviously experiencing extra demand with today's severe weather conditions. Hardware is cheap, please upgrade..."

### Compliments

- "@BCFerries I loved your prompt reply to my question. Twitter is very beneficial for many things. Info is great."
- "Hi – the color coded schedule is great! Please do this same graphic approach for weekend/summer, maybe you can persuade a few travellers to avoid the commuter sailings!"
- "You do a great job at keeping us all in the loop. Proud to share the same marine waters with you in Sidney & Active Pass."

## On the Web includes:

Group/Attribute	Complaints	Neutral	Compliments
On the Web: Login/Passwords	742	83	2
On the Web: Design And Usability	480	27	21
Reservations: Online Reservations	219	14	2
On the Web: Service Notices	88	26	7
On the Web: Information/General	62	35	13
On the Web: Travel Planning	47	9	1
On the Web: Current Conditions	24	8	7
On the Web: Online Giftshop	3	6	2
<b>% of all comments (9,005)</b>	<b>18.5%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>



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# On the Web

## Root Cause:

On May 12, 2011, BC Ferries launched a comprehensive redesign of its website. This included the introduction of a single online reservation channel to replace the two unique channels that had been in place since August 2008. The intention of consolidating the two reservation channels was to remove problems encountered by customers when trying to use a password for one channel to access the other.

## Lessons Learned:

Implementing the single access online reservation service proved to be a highly complex undertaking, particularly in terms of aligning customer accounts associated with the ten-year-old Reserved Boarding on the Internet (RBI) service. There were also a number of performance and account validation issues that did not emerge during the testing conducted, nor with external customer focus groups and staff.

## Action Taken:

Since the May 2011 launch, there have been eight subsequent releases plus a number of “spot fixes” aimed at correcting problems with the website.

Another release aimed at improving accessibility and functionality was attempted but proved unsuccessful due to technical issues stemming from aging infrastructure.

Following extensive technical review and heuristic evaluation, BC Ferries has decided to do a full redesign of its online reservation interface. This will eliminate a number of issues identified during customer usability tests and result in an efficient, intuitive website experience.

The improvements are planned for release in early 2013.

# Value For Fares/Cards

## Sample of Customer Comments:

### Complaints

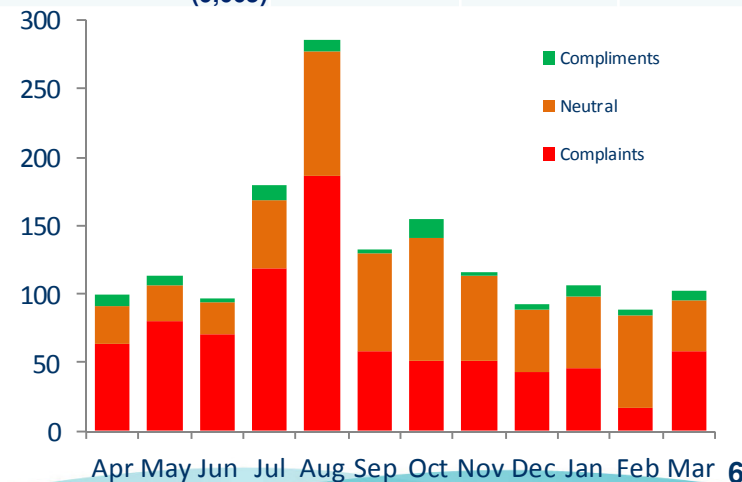
- “I drive a motor home and tow my jeep. We unhook the jeep when we use the ferry because we save \$51 travelling in each direction. Why does the ferry corporation make us go through the work to un-hook and re-hook. Why do you not charge the rate for the MH and the rate for the car separately so un-hooking is not necessary?”
- “Yet another fare increase. It is my feeling that if you would put the rates down (by a fair bit) that you would increase the number of people who could afford to travel to the island...”
- “I am curious and not just a little furious to learn that the BC Experience Card is only available for certain routes and does not apply to the TSA – Vancouver Island run. In an era where your new CEO publicly stated that his goal is to address the serious issue of the excessive cost of fares in BC Ferries it seems prejudice to offer this discount on some routes and not on others ...”
- “It’s been months since the last coast saver sailings. Bring them back ...”

### Compliments

- “I have travelled around the world on multiple ferries and this is the cleanest, and has the friendliest staff. The price is exceptional for the service that is provided.”
- “Hello, Thank you for the disabled status identification card I have just received for my daughter. I feel that the laminated cards are a great idea and will help prevent abuse of the system...”

## Value For Fares/Cards includes:

Group/Attribute	Complaints	Neutral	Compliments
Fares: Value For Fares Paid	329	53	11
Fares: Experience Card	106	47	10
Fares: Discount Fares	95	92	5
Fares: Coast Card	87	129	11
Fares: Other Fares	61	81	17
Fares: Errors	53	23	1
Fares: Refunds	41	176	17
Fares: Promotions	26	12	2
Fares: Frequent Travel	20	11	2
Fares: Credit/Debit Card	14	4	1
Fares: Sailpass/Circlepac	12	17	2
<b>% of all comments (9,005)</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>



\*Complaints = “bad” or “poor” rating accompanied by a comment  
 Note: 2011/12 = April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012

# Value For Fares/Cards

## Root Cause:

The Annual fare increase went into effect April 1, 2011 in accordance with the price provision set by the BC Ferry Commissioner in September 2007 for Performance Term Two.

On June 2, 2011, the Coastal Ferry Amendment Act (Bill 14) was enacted. Among other things, Bill 14 established a price cap for the first year of the Performance Term Three with an increase for each route group on April 1, 2012 of 4.15% from the weighted average of the tariffs payable as at March 31, 2012. BC Ferries implemented tariff increases April 1, 2012 to the new levels authorized. The April 1, 2012, price cap and tariff increases were moderated by incremental funding provided from the Province.

Overall, the price cap increases reflect the capital investment in ships, terminals, and Information Technology BC Ferries has had to make. It also reflects significant increases in operating costs related to items outside the control of the Company. This includes an approximate 260% increase in fuel costs since 2003, as well as significant increases in insurance premiums, property taxes, utilities, benefits program rates, contractual labor costs, and regulated labor requirements. The current structure of the Coastal Ferry Service Contract (CFSC) with the Province has also contributed to the level of the price caps and tariffs experienced. To date, under the CFSC BC Ferries has not been permitted to make any significant adjustments to service levels to achieve operational efficiencies that could lead to reductions in costs and fares.

## Lessons Learned:

There is anecdotal evidence that the increase in fares has caused customers to limit discretionary travel. A report provided by InterVISTAS Consulting Inc., acknowledges some minor price elasticity, but notes that there are other causal factors affecting ridership.

# Value For Fares/Cards

## Action Taken:

- New lines of business were introduced such as drop trailer and vacation packages whose revenue is being re-invested into the company and helps to keep fares down.
- Coast Saver Sail Promotion was offered on the Tsawwassen – Swartz Bay, Tsawwassen – Duke Point and Horseshoe Bay – Departure Bay routes, Thursday through Sunday from June 2 – 26, 2011.
- On July 26, 2011 BC Ferries announced its offer to refund customers who had purchased assured loading tickets. For a 90 day period, customers who had current or expired assured loading product purchased between 1984 and July 25, 2011 were able to apply for a one-time refund.
- On September 27, 2011 the company announced a major cost containment initiative in an effort to address the significant drop in revenues in the first half of the fiscal year as a result of declining traffic. Cost saving actions include: a hiring freeze of all non-essential positions; two-year wage and salary freeze for exempt employees; eighteen-month delay in select capital expenditures; elimination of many charitable and community donations; and select early retirements. In addition, BC Ferries applied to the Province to reduce up to 400 round trips on the major routes in response to traffic declines and anticipated revenue reductions.
- The Province has also recently taken significant steps to address the issue of fare affordability. In concert with the introduction of Bill 47 – Coastal Ferry Amendment Act – 2012 in May, 2012, the Province announced that it will further increase its financial contribution to BC Ferries to reduce the pressure for higher fares. As well, government announced its intention to make significant adjustments to service levels, and to do so within the context of discussions with communities about trade-offs among service adjustments, fare increases and potential community contributions. In addition, government will seek public input to develop strategies to support a vision for connecting coastal communities. Together, these actions have the potential to make a significant impact in terms of addressing future fare affordability.



# Staff Helpfulness

## Sample of Customer Comments:

### Complaints

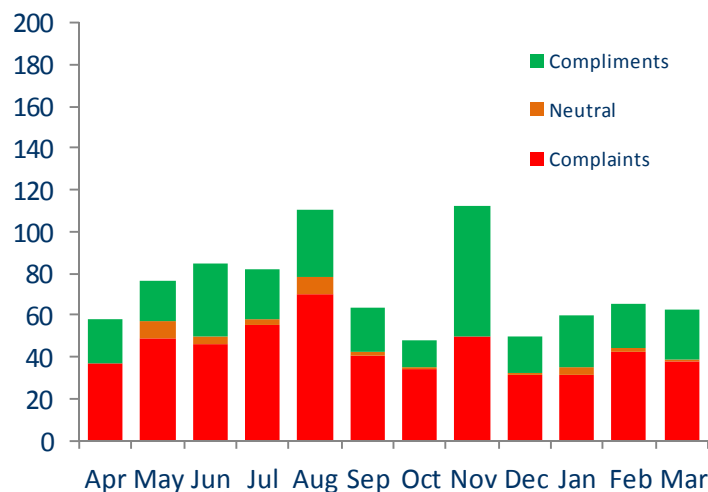
- “Well trained, but was she lying about me being 2 minutes late for my reservation, or do the “tower people” need more accurate clocks? It’s condescending in the age of technology when my cell phone, GPS, watch with atomic radio receiver technology all say 9:30 am when we get to the line, she claims it was undisputedly 9:32 am. Really?...”
- “I was trying to make a reservation at the Sturdies Bay terminal and was told by the ticket agent that she was off and leaving and to call the customer service centre and closed the window.”
- “The lady pretty much told me to go online and figure out the rates myself. Seemed like I had bothered her and she didn’t have time to answer my questions.”

### Compliments

- “The ticket agents at the Departure Bay terminal were extremely helpful. I had a medical emergency and had to rush over to Surrey to meet with a specialist. They printed out the directions to get there. It was great customer service. Thank you.”
- “A big thank you to the wonderful BC Ferries gentleman at Swartz Bay yesterday who helped me when I locked my keys in the car.”

## Staff Helpfulness includes:

Group/Attribute	Complaints	Neutral	Compliments
Check In: Staff Helpfulness	201	4	44
Inside the Terminal: Staff Helpfulness	163	14	81
Fares: Staff Helpfulness	98	6	119
Outside the Terminal: Staff Helpfulness	20	2	9
On the Phone: Information Accuracy	20	3	0
On the Phone: Agent Helpfulness	12	2	62
On the Phone: Resolution Of Issues	10	2	1
<b>% of all comments (9,005)</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>



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# Staff Helpfulness

## Root Cause:

Communication issues, ticketing errors, misunderstandings, inappropriate behavior by employee leading to customer dissatisfaction.

## Lessons Learned:

Customer feedback has given us an opportunity to identify areas of improvement in customer service and ongoing customer service training and coaching is required.

## Action Taken:

Complaints regarding employees are investigated on a case by case basis. The customer is sent a response with an apology.

Where communication is the issue, information is provided to the customer to assist in preventing further confusion. In the case of inaccurate information or inappropriate behavior by an employee, corrective action is taken with the employee and the customer is contacted to correct the misunderstanding.

Positive feedback is also shared with the employees.

# Reservation General

## Sample of Customer Comments:

### Complaints

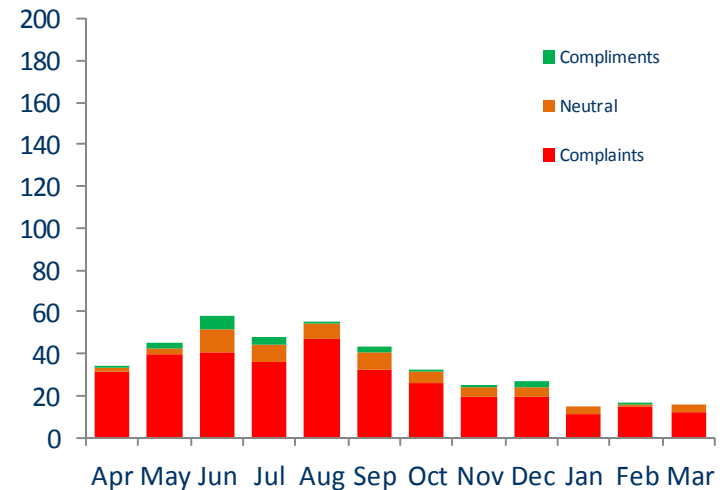
- “If a vessel is delayed, sometimes like today for 45 minutes on the Langdale run, why should reservation holders have to check in at the scheduled time and therefore have to wait a long time before boarding?...”
- “I just missed the reservation cut-off by 7 minutes because of traffic delays. The sailing from Swartz Bay was 75% full at my time of arrival and plenty of room in the reservation lane. Instead of allowing me to benefit from priority loading I was directed to the general loading area. I understand your policy and your employee followed policy to the letter. No fault of hers. However, it’s very irksome to be denied a benefit for no reason other than blind adherence to policy...”
- “I wonder if you have any idea how intractable, inflexible, dogmatic and unfriendly your reservation policy is.”

### Compliments

- “Our thanks to Jenny and her supervisor for ensuring this reservation, which enabled us to get to the cancer clinic for a last minute appointment.”
- “Thank you so much for your prompt reply to our bus reservation request. Our tour leaves Pennsylvania on Tuesday and I wanted everything to be in place for the Tour Director before leaving. The contact information is very helpful. I have been very impressed with the friendly, reliable service of BC Ferries.”

## Reservation General includes:

Group/Attribute	Complaints	Neutral	Compliments
Reservations: Policies	124	21	2
Check In: Reservations	63	8	0
Reservations: General	39	21	6
Reservations: Availability	32	2	5
Reservations: Flexibility/Changes	32	4	4
Reservations: Cost	17	4	0
Reservations: Automated Phone Reservations (IVR)	13	1	2
Reservations: Booking With An Agent	9	2	4
<b>% of all comments (9,005)</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>



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# Reservation General

## Root Cause:

To allow sufficient time for safe loading of vessels, BC Ferries implemented a 30 minute cut-off for reservation redemption at the ticket booth. This reservation cut-off is historic and has been in place for many years.

Infrequent travellers, booking a reservation, will often overlook the importance of the 30 minute cut-off. Customers who miss the reservation cut-off are often surprised their reservation won't be honoured and they must travel on standby.

## Lessons Learned:

It is imperative that customers are made fully aware of reservation policies at the time of booking to avoid disappointment at the time of travel.

## Action Taken:

Clear communication is in place via the following channels: reservation terms and conditions, reservation confirmation e-mail, FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) on the website, through our IVR system, and during the booking process with our Customer Service Agents. Communication through these channels is reviewed annually to ensure the messaging is effective and delivered consistently to customers at the time of booking.

Each complaint made will be investigated to determine if an error on behalf of BC Ferries led to the customer's reservation not being redeemed as per policy. This includes the possibility of employee not following procedures or customer service agents being unclear about policies at time of booking:

- If an error is identified the reservation fee will be refunded to the customer and corrective training action will be taken with the employee.
- If it is determined that the issue is related to unclear written communication, the collateral material will be reviewed and improved. In this case, the customer will also receive a refund of the reservation fee.
- If the policy was clearly communicated at the time of booking and no error has been made, a thorough explanation of the reason for the policy will be provided to create an increased awareness of the complexity of loading a vessel and maintaining on time departures.

With improvements being made to the online reservations system, to be released in early 2013, BC Ferries has usability tested the communication of its reservations policies. Based on customer feedback, improvements have been made on how policy information is displayed online.

# Loading/Unloading

## Sample of Customer Comments:

### Complaints

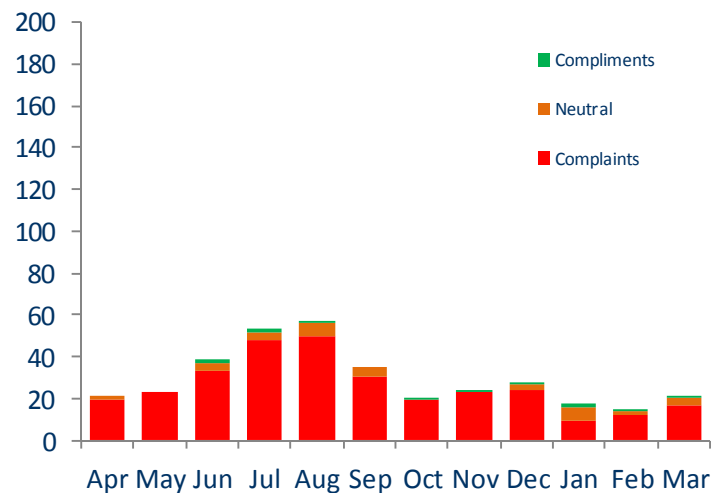
- "Can you try to have the people who pay to reserve or arrive an hour early exit off the boat first and not the end during unloading?"
- "I drive a VW Beetle. I want to ask why I am always put to the very end of the outside lanes because I have a small car? I don't really care where on the boat I park but I feel that I should be parked fairly in the order that I am in the line-up. If I am let off as almost the last car every time, it means I am behind a whole load of often slow traffic that I have to wait behind for an hour long drive on the Sunshine Coast."

### Compliments

- "Since we had never boarded the ferry as walk-on passengers, we were happy to have staff, who saw us coming with luggage in tow, provide verbal directions to allow us get to the waiting ferry efficiently. The staff were courteous and encouraged us to "walk" safely on boarding..."
- "The Swartz Bay Terminal Manager kindly assisted us to find alternative accommodation with the support of customer relations. We were gratefully able to store our bikes and take a taxi to Sidney for overnight accommodation and a meal. The problem occurred due to a string of small errors ... The Terminal Manager and BCF came to our rescue. We are forever grateful for the compassionate concern and assistance of all the employees in handling this difficult problem."

## Loading/Unloading includes:

Group/Attribute	Complaints	Neutral	Compliments
On the Ship: Loading/Unloading	134	22	3
Inside the Terminal: Loading/Directions	155	11	6
Sailings: Loading Error	18	3	2
<b>% of all comments (9,005)</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>



\*Complaints = "bad" or "poor" rating accompanied by a comment  
 Note: 2011/12 = April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012

# Loading/Unloading

## Root Cause:

Customers expect to be loaded and discharged in the order their vehicle arrived at the terminal.

## Lessons Learned:

The expectation of first on – first off is frequently expressed by customers and perceived as a lack of customer service if not provided. BC Ferries recognizes there are advantages to being loaded first and unloaded first. While operationally we are unable to guarantee first on - first off loading, we could improve our communication to help customers understand why this is a challenge to deliver consistently.

## Action Taken:

When the issue of first on – first off and the vehicle placement is raised, staff offer a thorough explanation of the factors impacting placement:

- Stability of the vessel in the water and positioning of the ramp during loading
- Even distribution of traffic to maintain vessel stability during crossing
- Optimize use of car deck space in order to accommodate as many customers as possible

The time a vehicle arrives at the terminal will determine if it will be loaded on a sailing but not necessarily where on the car deck it will be parked. The consequences of moving to a declared first on – first off guarantee would be:

- Late sailings due to single lane loading
- Less vehicles on the car deck
- Increased sailing waits for customers left behind