



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### **Island Intercity Bus Service to Pause Services Starting January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023**

**VICTORIA, BC** – Tofino Bus, which also operates the Vancouver Island Connector, will be pausing their services on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, and will not resume services again until May 2023 as they look to move towards a more seasonal service. John Wilson, President, and CEO of The Wilson’s Group of Companies which acquired Tofino bus in 2018, says that this was not a decision made lightly by the company as they know many people rely on these services. “We are very concerned about the safety of the people who rely on our service. Sadly, we have no other options,” says Wilson.

Tofino Bus is Vancouver Island’s only intercity bus service. In 2022 they provided transportation to twenty-nine communities and twenty-one First Nations and First Nations organizations on Vancouver Island.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a 95% decline in ridership on these routes, passenger counts have not returned to a sustainable level year-round with much of the customer volume being in the Spring/Summer months. “The passenger counts drop so drastically in the fall and winter months that the revenue made during our peak season just simply isn’t enough to sustain the service 12 months of the year,” says Wilson.

In March 2021, Tofino Bus received a one-time grant from the BC Government to help cover operating costs while the company tried to recover from the devastating losses from the COVID-19 shut-downs. As of March 2022, all funding from the Provincial Government came to an end. While the Tofino Bus intercity bus service provides the same essential service as public transit, as a privately owned company without any government subsidies, it depends on ticket sales to cover all costs.

“We have tried our best to cut back on costs where we can,” says Wilson, stating that they have made drastic cuts to service levels over the past few months. However, having received all available government subsidies and grants, continued rising costs and labor shortages, Tofino Bus feels they have no other choice but to continue to make difficult operational changes.

“With our current passenger counts we are unable to cover the operational expenses for these runs and cannot continue to operate these routes at a loss through the winter months. Therefore, we have made the decision to move to a seasonal, May through October, service.”

January 3<sup>rd</sup> will be the last day of service for Tofino Bus and the Vancouver Island Connector until it resumes service in May, no exact start date has been released. Any passengers who have pre-purchased tickets during this period will be contacted by a member of their Reservations staff and issued refunds.