

Should Toddlers Be Held Captive For BC Ferries' TVs?

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, January 12, 2011

<https://politicsrespun.org/2011/01/should-toddlers-be-held-captive-for-bc-ferries-tvs/>

I have a few questions for BC Ferries, our not-really-crown corporation.

1. Does BC Ferries get paid to show TV to toddlers?
2. Is there some reason why there is a TV in the playground rooms on some BC Ferries?
3. Should toddlers have to be subjected to TV for most of a 90 minute voyage to or from Vancouver Island?

[I've already gone into some depth](#) about how the BC Liberal government has privatized BC Ferries, yet remained its sole shareholder, and what I think of the corporate welfare scam of BC Ferries advertising on the bottom of the scoreboard at Canucks games.

But while it is nice for most passengers that BC Ferries has provided little playgrounds for kiddies [in part to ensure they don't run amok through the whole ferry bugging anyone who doesn't happen to choose to sit near them], why are there large TVs with blaring sound in the playground rooms?

I find the noise quite loud and I'm used to spending most of the voyage with the half dozen or so toddlers in those rooms. So when I get on the ferry, I typically turn off the TV. Sometimes the switch on those new HD TVs is hard to find. Other times I just unplug the cable. But I haven't figured out how to disconnect the sound, which gets piped through ceiling speakers. I figure I'd need a ladder for that.

On one voyage I asked a crew member walking by why the TV had to be so loud. He popped his head in and expressed equal disgust at the barrage of noise. He said he'd look into it. I expected his lack of return indicated there was nothing he could do about it.

So why is there TV? To entertain the kids, I guess. Unless BC Ferries is getting paid by Treehouse or someone to play it.

Is TV good for little kids? No. [The American Academy of Pediatrics advises no TV for kids under two.](#)

Again, why does BC Ferries put a TV in a room with playground equipment designed to keep kids active. After all, kids want to move around and play, but they will embrace the obese zombie lifestyle if you give them a TV.

I watched a debate in Twitter a couple weeks ago about this very thing.

One person apparently had been [confronted, "yelled at," by staff after turning off a BC Ferries TV](#). She asked the Twitterverse and [BC Ferries](#) quite pointedly whether it actually was corporate policy that the TVs must be on in the playground rooms. Now remember, corporate policies are merely arbitrary rules corporations develop to allow staff to sound like it's an official policy why something can't be. Is

corporate policy the Lord Jehovah's commandment such that I can't return this can of soup on the 15th day because the policy is a 14 day return policy? You'd think.

Anyway, BC Ferries Twitter spinner [replied with this gem of a circular argument](#):

TV service is provided for customers in various areas of the vessel. Therefore, passengers expect this service to be available.

This essentially means that BC Ferries decided [for whatever reasons] to put TVs in places. Since they did that, people now expect that, so their hands are tied and they can't take them away. That's just foolish for the playground rooms and for other places on the ferries.

The principled traveler replied in Twitter that if it is corporate policy, she felt that to be [disrespectful of parents](#).

Frankly, I find it quite disrespectful to me, an adult, that there are so many loud TVs in so many places on BC Ferries. Whatever happened to a reasonably media-free voyage? What about the often majority of passengers trying hard to avoid the blaring TV stuck near them? Is BC Ferries being paid to show a certain channel on its TVs?

[BC Ferries replied to her accusation](#) of disrespect like a good Orwellian bureaucracy:

This amenity is provided in a public space. Note of your concern has been frwd to our Customer Relations department.

I won't spend an hour explaining how the use of the word "public" is a bother, considering that BC Ferries is a private corporation that used to be a publicly-owned crown corporation that now has one share owned by an arm of the BC government which is democratically empowered to act on behalf of the BC public citizenry. There is no public space on a ferry. There is no public space in a shopping mall. But I'll let that go.

Claiming that the TV is an amenity, not a threat to the development of toddlers [and others] for instance, means the public shouldn't complain about something being given to us. Then having the concern forwarded to customer relations is a hearty attempt at handling the situation.

The BC Ferries Twitter spinner chose not to reply to [this tweet about the American Academy of Pediatrics](#):

@[BCFerries](#) You don't care about AAP rec of ZERO TV for kids under 2? [#fail](#)

The last thing BC Ferries wants to get into is a debate about whether TV is bad for toddlers when they have TVs in the toddler area. Just ignore the tweet and it will go away. Or will it.

Regardless of the confusion about the public-private nature of BC Ferries, we all still own them, albeit quite indirectly. We have some say over whether they create a two-tiered seating area by cordoning off one section for people who wish to pay \$12 to experience the elite accommodations of [the Seawest Lounge](#). We get to decide whether they will pollute our supernatural trip through BC coastal waters with so many TVs, usually in the areas of the ship with the most seats.

In short, we still have some sway, even if BC Ferries wishes to insist they're a private corporation. We still own that corporation.

So I have these questions for BC Ferries, the ones above and these ones:

1. Has BC Ferries done any research about whether it is good for the kinds of children who are in their playground rooms to be subjected to TVs?
2. Has BC Ferries explored policy options about whether parents should have the right to not have TV on in places where their toddlers will spend much of the voyage?
3. Does BC Ferries follow up with complaints/concerns in an effort to manage the conflict or to actually address substantive issues?
4. Should parents have the right determine what influences their toddlers?

In the end, we can let ourselves be handled, or we can demand that we have the latitude to parent our children without being mollified with circular arguments from bureaucracies that are supposed to serve us.

In the end, I'm optimistic. The crew member I spoke with one of the times I turned off the playground TVs didn't yell at me, but was on my side. I think common sense will prevail here, but like justice, we won't get it unless we fight for it.