

NEWS RELEASE – from the Ferry Advisory Committee Chairs (FACC)

Community input into ferry contract review

30 NOVEMBER 2010 – The Ferry Advisory Committee Chairs (FACC) have prepared two reports that they have asked government to consider in the current review of the coastal ferry contract:

- Ominous Clouds

Summary of critical issues and data, including fare and traffic effects, cost drivers, potential service reductions, and government funding analysis.

http://www.gabriola.org/facc/archive/Discussions%20papers/ominous_cloud_101104.pdf

- Community Impacts

Summary of the impacts of fare escalation on coastal families, workforce, economies, part-time residents and tourists, with examples from residents and businesses.

http://www.gabriola.org/facc/archive/Discussions%20papers/Community%20impacts_FACC%2017Nov2010.pdf

The contract review will set fare increase caps and service levels for a four-year period starting April 2012. Current factors are set to produce fare hikes in the range of 10% a year, or to require service cuts, or both.

"The only variable that can substantially change those fare increases or service decreases is provincial funding support," says Brian Hollingshead of Saturna Island.

Since 2003, fares on average increased 60%, and in some cases more than 100%. In the same period inflation increased by less than 11%. The basic provincial contribution did not increase in that period, although there was additional provincial funding to help with northern capital costs.

"Few coastal residents expect a free ride, as is the case with the inland ferries. Few expect fares not to increase. But most expect increases in line with other costs, as expressed by the Consumer Price Index," says Tony Law of Hornby Island.

Like all of BC's rural communities, coastal communities need affordable, accessible lifeline infrastructure. On the coast that includes ferries.

"Affordable ferries alone won't create jobs and rebuild our economies, but we can be sure it will be very difficult with fare increases compounding at 10% a year," says Bill Cripps of Powell River. "We'll have large accumulating annual increases on an already inflated base – the opposite of affordable."

Among the FACC's recommendations, they ask the provincial government to weigh the FACC findings, and the value of affordable public access to the BC coast, and to consider public funding that will keep ferry fare increases in line with inflation.

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www.gabriola.org/facc

BACKGROUND

FERRY CONTRACT REVIEW (Performance Term 3 review / PT3 review)

REVIEW PROCESS SUMMARY:

<http://gabriola.org/facc/archive/Releases/Release14-final.pdf>

BC FERRIES' INPUT INTO THE REVIEW

- BC Ferries' Efficiency Plan
- BC Ferries' Submission

Both available on the BC Ferry Commission website:

http://bcferrycommission.com/downloads_and_links.html

KEY DATES:

OCTOBER 15, 2010 - BC Ferries submitted financial and operational information to the Ferry Commissioner, as well as a separate efficiency plan, consisting of options for the Province to consider as ways to reduce ferry service costs.

MARCH 31, 2011 - The Commissioner issues preliminary new fare caps by this date. These preliminary fares are calculated using current service levels and transportation fees (government funding).

JUNE 30, 2011 - The Province announces a decision by this date, on whether it wants to change service levels or its transportation fees.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2011 - The Commissioner issues final new fare increase caps by this date, based on the Province's decisions. These increase caps will be in effect from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2016.