

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

Cumulative Ferry Fare Hikes Being Felt in Coastal Communities

2 APRIL 2007 – Compounded fare increases on most of BC's ferry routes could reach an average of 85% over 2003 fares by the end of the next regulated service term.

Preliminary fare caps were released Friday for the second performance term (PT2) of the contract between the Province and BC Ferries. The large increases affect 22 routes serving BC's ferry-dependent communities.

“We already have signs that people are using ferries less than expected because of increases to date, says Greg Aivazoff, Ferry Advisory Committee Chair in Powell River. “If this round of hikes cuts further into travel, then we'll see big hits to coastal economies and to the contribution they make to BC tourism.”

The preliminary fare caps are based on provincial government contributions remaining unchanged in the coming term. The Province has until June 30 to decide how much it will contribute in the new term, and on any changes to service levels. Transport Minister Kevin Falcon has given assurances that communities will have a voice in deliberations.

BC's ferry system is the least subsidized part of the provincial transportation network. The Auditor General's office says BC Ferries gets only 19% of its revenue from the Province. The company faces significant capital spending, however, to replace aging vessels and terminals.

The communities' Ferry Advisory Committees Chairs (FACC) notes that ferry travel is not keeping pace with growth in population and in tourism. The FACC also sees decreases in small business activity and changing travel patterns to and from the communities.

The FACC is meeting with provincial officials later this month. The group looks forward to offering suggestions for keeping ferry service accountable, sustainable and accessible for all British Columbians who travel the coast.

FACC Contacts:

Denman-Hornby, Tony Law ceec@telus.net 250-335-1155

Bowen Island, Terry Cotter, tcotter2@telus.net 604-947-0843

Quadra-Cortes, John Sprungman, sprungman@twincomm.ca 250-935-6332

Thetis-Kuper, Ian Ralston, pas@pacificcoast.net 250-246-4774

Gabriola Island, Andre Lemieux, andre.lemieux@shaw.ca 250-247-9889

Gambier-Keats, Joyce Clegg, jaclegg@primesignal.com 604-886-2763

North and Central Coast, Steve Smith, ssmith@cresthotel.bc.ca 250-624-1974

Northern Sunshine Coast, Greg Aivazoff, histump@yahoo.ca 604-485-0045

Saltspring Island, Bob Jones, 270ltd@saltspring.com 250-537-5514

Southern Gulf Islands, Dave Dryer, innonpender@cablelan.net 250-629-3353

Southern Sunshine Coast, Jakob Knaus, falconjk@telus.net 604 885 7793

Pt.McNeill-Sointula-Alert Bay, Jo Mrozewski, jo@runninglight.ca 250-974-9913