

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

Ferry Fares To Increase By More Than 30% Over Current Rates

16 SEPTEMBER 2007 – Recent reports of 25% hikes in BC Ferries' fares are not the total picture of increases to come, according to representatives for ferry users.

Figures from BC Ferries President and CEO David Hahn don't include increases set for November. Nor do they reflect the latest cost of fuel, and projections for future fuel costs.

The Ferry Advisory Committee Chairs (FACC), who head 12 groups that provide public input into service for ferry-dependent communities, note that when all the factors are considered, ferry users face an average increase of at least 30%. They expect the hikes will be even higher, as a result of the inflation multiplier in the new fare formula.

With unprecedented increases in recent years, users of routes to ferry-dependent communities will be paying fare hikes of more than 80% from 2003 to 2011 fares.

The fare increases are a result of the provincial government's decision to fix its contribution to these local routes at 2003 levels, unlike the federal contribution which is tied to the consumer price index. Some additional provincial funding will cover ship replacement and fuel cost backlogs on the northern routes.

"The Coastal Ferry Act limits BC Ferries' ability to set fares," notes Jo Mrozewski, chair of the FAC for Alert Bay and Sointula. "The government has chosen to put most of ferries' capital and operational costs on travellers."

John Sprungman, who chairs the FAC for Quadra and Cortes Islands says "we live in communities where ferries affect almost every aspect of our lives. As a result of these increases, the cost of living in our communities is escalating rapidly. It's limiting tourism, business and employment opportunities in dozens of coastal communities."

The FACC call on government to moderate its push toward user pay, and help hold ferry fare increases to the rate of inflation.

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