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BC Ferries now deciding future ferry fares & services

John Sprungman

Decisions that will determine the fares and the level of ferry service for the rest of the BC coast from 2008 to 2012 will be made by the provincial government over the next six to nine months. It has become clear that the corporate structure which the government created for BC Ferries in 2003 has disadvantaged coastal communities by freezing service levels and significantly increasing fares without giving them an effective way to have their concerns heard.

Ferry Advisory Committees (FAC), nominated by, and including, many elected local government representatives from all over the BC coast, are now focused on influencing the conditions and price caps the government will specify in the second performance term (PT2) of the Coastal Ferry Services Contract, which will take effect April 1, 2008.

As chair of the Campbell River-Quadra-Cortes FAC, I

attended the annual general meeting of BC Ferries in Victoria on September 21–22 and met with the chairs of 11 other Ferry Advisory Committees. Together we represented all of BC Ferries' routes from the Southern Gulf Islands to Prince Rupert, except the Mainland-Vancouver Island ferries. We also met for several hours with BC Ferries' President and CEO David Hahn and a number of his executives.

The information we gleaned from these meetings and from talking with each other made it abundantly clear that it is a high priority for coastal communities to establish a process for direct consultation between Ferry Advisory Committees and the provincial government so that we have a say in the future of our ferry services. To pursue this, Ferry Advisory Committees will return to Victoria on November 17 to meet with officials of the Ministry of Transport. ✉

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