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POWELL RIVER
REGIONAL DISTRICT

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Central Coast Regional District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Coastal Regional District Chairs Group

Powell River, BC – February 25, 2015 – Tipping point to swan dive.

The Coastal Regional District Chairs Group recently met with the BC Ferry Commissioner, Mr. Gordon Macatee.

The Group expressed concern about the continuing lack of a vision statement by BC Ferries, and that coastal communities are now well beyond the tipping point: the total traffic for BC Ferries has dropped to 1991 levels. The significant increases in fares are making BC Ferries unaffordable. The last scheduled fare increase of 3.9% in Performance Term 3, will take effect on April 1, 2015.

As a regulator, the Commissioner is completely independent of the Provincial Government and BC Ferries. The difficulty for the Group is that as traffic continues to decline, so does revenue. Reductions in service further reduce the traffic, yet the Commissioner has to come up with ferry fare proposals to keep the Corporation financially sustainable. Under this mandate, the Commissioner has no option but to signal that ferry fares must go up.

The Commissioner is now preparing a preliminary Price Cap Position for Performance Term 4, an evaluation term within the 60-year Coastal Ferry Services Contract that begins April 2016. It is expected that position will be released by the end of March 2015 to be followed by a six-month pause for public input.

The Group was formed in 2011 as a result of growing concern about the economic and social impacts of BC Ferries system on coastal economies. This concern has not changed and in fact has been strengthened in light of a report by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) which clearly demonstrates that the effects of the BC Ferry system are actually province-wide. The Coastal Chairs continue to maintain the position that the BC Ferry system is a part of the province-wide network of highways and transportation infrastructure.

The Group intends to meet with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure in March 2015.

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Board Meeting

MAR 12 2015

CCRD ITEM F(9)