Ferries post first quarter loss, fuel savings

Usually, BC Ferries makes a small profit in the first quarter of the fiscal year, April to June. (The most profitable quarter is the second, July to September.) However, this year, net losses were $3.6 million, which can be compared to profits of $8.4 million for the same period last year. Vehicle traffic was down 1% and passenger traffic down 0.4% compared to last year.

Revenues were up by 3.7% to $178.3 million. However, this was a smaller increase than fare levels.

Total expenses were also up by 11.3% to $181.9 million. The increase in expenses was mainly due to an $11.2 million increase in interest costs and amortization for new vessels, and a $5.4 million increase in maintenance costs.

BC Ferries blames a decrease in economic activity and in international tourism for the reductions in ridership.

The Queens of Vancouver and Prince Rupert have gone, the Queen of New Westminster is back, and the Northern Expedition is now serving the Port Hardy–Prince Rupert route.

However, good news for the minor routes—clever fuel buying will mean that the fuel cost rebate will go from 8% to 10% on September 1, 2009.