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***Northern Expedition* could leave from Tsawwassen**

BC Ferries has proposed that, starting in 2011, the ferry *Northern Expedition* would dock at Tsawwassen once in two weeks during the summer—supplementing its existing service between Prince Rupert and Port Hardy.

The Vancouver voyage would be introduced as part of one of the seven round-trips currently providing service between the North Coast and North Vancouver Island. According to BC Ferries, this would 'facilitate travel opportunities, with direct or connecting service to Prince Rupert, Discovery Coast destinations, Port Hardy and the Queen Charlotte Islands.'

Cracking Cruise Ship Market Needs Additional Facilities at Tsawwassen

Essentially, starting the voyage closer to Vancouver would be an next step in BC Ferries' efforts to attract cruise ship business. It would involve special facilities at Tsawwassen. While southern-service ships are built to fit docks with their own ramps, northern-service ships have ship-based ramps (remember the *Queen of Chilliwack?*); and passengers on northern ships must be listed on the ship's manifest and participate in crew and passenger safety drills.

Downside Impacts

The proposal has met with concerns in Prince Rupert and Smithers because this port change is seen as damaging to the cities' tourist trade. In addition, Prince Rupert anticipates the possible loss of 100 full-time 'casual' ferry jobs, 30-40 summer employment opportunities for students, and an 'unknown amount' of permanent full-time jobs.

Changing the Mandate

In a January 11 letter to Minister Shirley Bond, Jack Mussalem, Mayor of the City of Prince Rupert, quotes from last year's Comptroller General's report on BC Ferries: 'There is a risk that a focus on the profitability or sustainability of the ferry operator exclusively could be at the expense of the public service mandate of the ferry system. For example, short term decisions, focused on maximizing profit to the operator, could compromise the public service goals of the ferry system by not considering fully the interests of users of the ferry system, local communities and taxpayers.' Prince Rupert's concerns are echoed in a February 1 letter to the Minister from Gary Coons, MLA for the North Coast. ✉

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