

For Immediate Release
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April 5, 2017

**COMMISSIONER APPROVES PURCHASE OF USED VESSEL FOR NEW
PORT HARDY – BELLA COOLA SERVICE
New ferry route to start in the summer of 2018**

VICTORIA – The BC Ferries Commissioner has approved BC Ferries’ application to acquire a suitable used vessel to start a seasonal direct ferry service between Port Hardy and Bella Coola to support Aboriginal tourism and the mid-coast economy. BC Ferries is now finalizing an agreement to buy a 75-metre vessel that is operating in Greece.

“When the Province announced its commitment to the new route last year, BC Ferries launched an international search to secure an appropriate vessel,” said Mark Collins, BC Ferries’ President and CEO. “We looked at numerous ships on the global market using both experienced ship brokers and direct contacts. We believe this vessel, with its strong sea-keeping ability, size and enhanced amenities, will provide an excellent experience for customers exploring the spectacular Great Bear Rainforest.”

The vessel, currently named Aqua Spirit, was built in 2000 and will accommodate a minimum of 35 vehicles and 150 passengers and crew. BC Ferries takes possession of the ship in August 2017. The purchase price for the vessel was 8.75 million Euros (with conversion approximately \$12.6 million CAD). It will undergo major upgrades from the fall of 2017 through the spring of 2018. All passenger areas will be refurbished including lounges, the galley, washrooms and outer deck spaces.

Mechanical modifications will include overhauling the main engines and generators; regulatory surveys; upgrading machinery and navigation equipment; and replacement of lifesaving equipment. The vessel already fits BC Ferries’ northern berths. Several smaller terminals will be modified to the northern configuration to accommodate the new ship.

Summer service is scheduled to begin in 2018 and will run from mid-June through mid-September on the direct route between Port Hardy and Bella Coola five times per week. The ship will also provide service to the other mid-coast ports of Bella Bella, Ocean Falls and Shearwater in the summer, as well as in the off-season.

The voyage between Port Hardy and Bella Coola will take approximately 10 hours and will be conducted in the daytime to maximize tourism potential. BC Ferries will be engaging with the mid-coast community regarding the exact sailing schedule, naming of the vessel and onboard amenities. More details will be announced in the coming weeks.

Partial funding for the project will be provided by the federal government through the Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Component – National and Regional Projects.

Under Section 55(1) of the *Coastal Ferry Act*, BC Ferries may apply to the BC Ferries Commissioner for a determination that a proposed capital expenditure is reasonably required. The BC Ferries Commissioner’s decision may be found at www.bcferrycommission.com.

Under contract to the Province of British Columbia, BC Ferries is the service provider responsible for the delivery of safe, efficient and dependable ferry service along coastal British Columbia.

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Vessel information attached

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COMING SUMMER 2018
NEW DIRECT SEASONAL SUMMER SERVICE

PORT HARDY – BELLA COOLA



JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF THE GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST

Board the ferry in Port Hardy and step into a world of rugged glacial fjords, towering old-growth rainforests and rich First Nations history. Watch for otters, sea lions and humpback whales in the picturesque waters of the Inside Passage as you journey 10 hours north to Bella Coola. Surrounded by the natural beauty of BC's central coast, you're free to explore the mist-shrouded streams and ancient cedars of the famed

Great Bear Rainforest. When in Bella Coola, hike to spectacular lookouts and hidden waterfalls, or take a wildlife tour to the more secluded sections of the forest to see Kermode, Black and Grizzly bears in their natural habitat. As eagles soar overhead and the forest stretches silently into the horizon, the feeling of this spectacular place will inscribe itself into your memory. This route can be travelled in either direction.

VESSEL INFORMATION

Built: 2000

Capacity: At least 150 passengers and crew, and 35 vehicles (AEQ)*

Amenities: Hot food service, passenger lounge, outdoor seating area, washrooms and an elevator

ROUTE INFORMATION

Dates of Operation: Direct service from June 19 to September 14, starting 2018

Travel Time: Approximately 10 hours, sailings during daylight hours

Frequency: 5 direct trips per week



Schedule and fare information will be announced soon.
To learn more about this exciting new route, visit bcferries.com.

*Automobile Equivalent (AEQ) is used to determine vessel capacity based on a standard vehicle measure of 6.1 x 2.6 meters, roughly equal to a full-size family vehicle.