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BC FERRIES ENCOURAGES B.C. AND CANADIAN SHIPYARDS TO RESPOND TO REQUESTS FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST TO BUILD FIVE VESSELS

VICTORIA – BC Ferries issued Requests for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) today for the procurement of five new vessels to replace aging fleet assets. The competitive bidding process is open to local, national and international shipyards, including consortiums, and BC Ferries encourages local and national companies to bid on these projects.

The first RFEOI is for the procurement process for the construction of four 81-metre Island Class ferries, each with a capacity of 450 passengers and 47 vehicles. The expected delivery date for the first two of these vessels is in 2020, with the following two ships delivered in 2021. The second RFEOI is for the construction of one 107-metre Salish Class vessel with a capacity of 600 passengers and 138 vehicles. The expected delivery date for this vessel is in 2021.

Two Island Class vessels are currently under construction and three Salish Class ships joined the fleet last year. BC Ferries holds the design rights to both classes of vessels and will specify that the new vessels are to be built identically to ensure interoperability. The designs will be provided to shipyards.

“These new vessels will help us move toward our ambition to be leaders in the transition to a lower carbon future, and our standardization and interoperability of the fleet. This improves safety, environmental performance and resiliency, and reduces costs,” said Mark Wilson, BC Ferries’ Vice President of Strategy and Community Engagement.

“The Island Class ships will be electric hybrid propulsion, including batteries, and the Salish Class will be fuelled with natural gas,” said Wilson. “These new clean-tech vessels will reduce our carbon emissions, helping the Province achieve its greenhouse gas reduction targets, and have the added benefit of reducing the amount of underwater radiated noise we produce.”

The five new ships will replace the Bowen Queen, Mayne Queen and Powell River Queen, which will allow for the redeployment of some assets around the fleet. Replacing one older vessel with two new smaller vessels on the Nanaimo Harbour – Gabriola Island route and the Campbell River – Quadra Island route means major increases in capacity and frequency. The passenger carrying capacity on these runs will more than double from 400 to 900 passengers per hour, while the vehicle carrying capacity will increase by approximately 60 to 94 vehicles per hour. More frequent ferry service reduces line-ups, improves safety, provides more convenience to travellers and also eliminates the need to increase the size of the terminal holding compounds.

In the interest of ferry users, BC Ferries follows best practices in vessel procurement. The RFEOI is the first step in the process to inform industry of the vessel construction opportunities and solicit interest, capacity and capability from all shipyards. The next step will be a Request for Pre-Qualifications, followed by a Request for Proposals. The planned acquisition of the vessels represents a major capital expenditure which will require the approval of the BC Ferries Commissioner under Section 55 of the Coastal Ferry Act. BC Ferries will be making its application to the Commissioner soon and, subject to a favourable decision, envisages awarding a contract for these ferries by the end of 2018. BC Ferries looks forward to welcoming these new vessels into service, which will benefit British Columbia and all ferry users, over the coming years.

– 30 –

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