

**Meeting Details:**

Committee:	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Date:	May 8, 2008
Location:	Board Room, BC Ferries Headquarters, 1112 Fort St, Victoria, BC
Time:	1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**Attendees:**

<b><i>Public Interest Representatives:</i></b>	<b><i>BC Ferries Representatives:</i></b>
Pat Danforth, Disability Resource Centre, Victoria, Co-chair Susan Gallagher, Treasurer, Victoria Chapter Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians Scott Heron, BC Paraplegic Association Mary Kay Kennedy, Specialist – Orientation & Mobility, CNIB Hugh Mitchell, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Albert Ruel, National Director, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians Jane Sheaff, Executive Director, Seniors Serving Seniors Ernie Stigant, MS Society Valerie Thoem, Director, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities	Pat Morris, Manager, Operational Planning, Fleet Operations, Co-chair Bill McCormick, Customer Sales and Service Representative, Customer Care Paul McDaniel, Director Terminal Operations, Swartz Bay Roberta Chartier, Manager, Customer Service, Customer Care Geoff Dickson, Vice President, Food & Retail Operations Lilly Hutson, Director Finance & Process Control, New Vessel Construction
<b>Regrets:</b> Dawn Day, CNIB	Barbara Britton-Wilson, Director, Catering Services, Food & Retail Operations Jeff Davidson, Director, Retail Services, Food & Retail Operations Bruce Paterson, Fleet Technical Director

**1. Introductions**

The Chair welcomed the members and noted in particular:

- Geoff Dickson, Vice President Food & Retail Operations
- Paul McDaniel, representing Corrine Storey, VP – Terminal Operations
- Scott Heron of the BC Paraplegic Association, replacing Vivian Garcia
- Lilly Hutson of New Vessel Construction (presenting).

## 2. Review of minutes

### a. April 17, 2007

On motion by Scott Heron, seconded by Jane Sheaff, the minutes of the meeting of April 17, 2007 were approved.

### b. November 14, 2007

On motion by Hugh Mitchell, seconded by Sue Gallagher, the minutes of the meeting of November 14, 2007 were approved

## 3. Matters arising from the minutes

In the April meeting a discussion had occurred regarding the identification system used to obtain the discount available for persons with disabilities. No progress has been made to redevelop this system, and it remains an unresolved issue.

## 4. Committee review of 2006-07

Pat Danforth made a presentation reviewing the activities and achievements of the committee over the period following its formation in mid 2005. The presentation referenced the committee's role and terms of reference as an advisory group to assist BC Ferries in delivering a better quality of service to persons with disabilities and, by extension, to many others amongst the traveling public.

## 5. Discussion with sponsors

David Hahn, President of BC Ferries, joined the session at this time and spoke on behalf of the company. He apologized for the absence of the VPs of Fleet, Terminal and Engineering Operations. He commended the committee for its assistance over the past year and in particular in relation to the introduction of *Coastal Renaissance* (as well as *Inspiration* and *Celebration*) into operation. He also called on the committee to continue its efforts in advising the company and influencing its activities.

Various questions and comments were raised:

- Loading practices
- Communications
- Challenging disability identification by ticket agents
- Switching off the shipboard accessible washroom automatic door opener [Geoff Dickson to investigate this circumstance.]
- A testimonial was reported – European visitors (with disabilities) were very impressed with the physical environment and level of service available for travelers
- Communications should be improved in regard to the physical disruption (the example is the terminal reconstruction at Departure Bay) so that travelers are more prepared for the necessary adjustments to their travel arrangements
- Communicating for the hard-of-hearing: everything that is broadcast (PA announcements) should be replicated on screen
- Accessible washroom automatic door mechanisms: the closing time should not be excessive, and should fit within some known (or displayed) closing interval.

## 6. Vessel developments

### a. Coastal class vessels

Lilly Hutson (Director Finance & Process Control, New Construction Division) made a presentation summarizing the process involved in the introduction of *Coastal Renaissance* and the accessibility adjustments implemented during and after construction. The committee visit on February 8 had identified several modifications that would improve the accessibility of the vessel, particularly for those with mobility and vision challenges. The value of universal design was noted in facilitating travel for all users as well as users with physical challenges. The changes that could be readily implemented have been – these are generally contrast painting and additional flat and tactile signage. Some items (especially changes to the fittings in the accessible washrooms) will be considered at the first refit cycle and some items will be monitored in use to determine how to proceed.

### b. *Northern Adventure* and *Northern Expedition*

*Northern Adventure* is in the process of completing its second transitional refit bringing it closer to BC Ferries operating standards. A third transitional refit is planned for next year. The elevator has been reconstructed and certified, although (1) it continues to require crew as operators and (2) it remains significantly smaller than a standard elevator and lacks the clear 1.5 meter minimum clearance).

*Northern Expedition* is currently under construction in Germany (at the same FSG shipyard as constructed the Coastal-class vessels). As it is being custom-built to BC Ferries specifications it has many of the characteristics of the Coastal-class ships. It will be fitted with two wheelchair-accessible staterooms and two elevators.

### c. Intermediate (125-car) vessel

The *Island Sky* is currently under construction for service on Jervis Inlet, to replace the 1960-built *Queen of Tsawwassen*. The vessel is equipped with an elevator to access the single passenger deck, which contains all passenger amenities including an accessible washroom and combined food service / retail outlet.

### d. Intermediate vessel review

Pat Morris reported on work undertaken on nine of BC Ferries' intermediate vessels. These were identified because they all are scheduled for at least 10 years of continued service. They range in size from 50 to 127 car spaces and operate on runs ranging from 10 minutes to over 60 minutes. The committee was provided with a sample report. The reports will be forwarded to the Marine Superintendents and Engineering Superintendents for the respective vessels, for their guidance in setting priorities for accessibility improvements in the future.

## **7. Shipboard evacuation of persons with special needs (Transport Canada)**

The Committee was provided with correspondence from the Minister of Transport (Canada) dated 28 March 2008 related to accounting for and providing assistance to persons with special needs under emergency conditions. BC Ferries sought the assistance of the committee in developing an improved model as it relates to persons with disabilities or other special needs. It is anticipated this will entail BC Ferries drafting the proposal for review and comment from the committee.

There was a brief discussion regarding how this situation can be resolved while respecting the privacy of the traveler and their mobility within the vessel (i.e. how to locate persons with specific assistance requirements, in the event of an emergency). There may also be some differences in how a program could function for one-time users as compared to frequent users.

## **8. Video-Tel project and other training developments**

Pat Morris briefly described the training situation

- The Video-Tel product had been reviewed by several people within the company and had been considered satisfactory but not sufficiently specific to the situation. Consequently it has not been put into circulation.
- There is developing recognition that deck officers and crew, and terminal staff, need a greater appreciation and understanding of accessibility needs.
- The proposal received from Barrier-Free Design contained a training component, which represents an opportunity for BC Ferries.

Paul McDaniel (Terminal Director, Swartz Bay) volunteered to assist the committee on this issue.

## **9. Website developments**

BC Ferries is planning to re-launch its website within weeks with a mybcferries.com concept that is intended to make it more intuitive for users and therefore more accessible. A new reservations interface is under development, for delivery in approximately 12 months.

## **10. Other business**

No other business was raised.

## **11. Next meeting**

The next meeting is to occur in October / November. A specific date will be identified and circulated by email.

## **12. Meeting adjourned**

4:00 p.m.

**June 23, 2008**

## **Appendix 1 Presentation Text (to item 4)**

Slide 1

Title page

Accessibility Advisory Committee, Fleet House, Victoria, 08 May 2008

Slide 2

Agenda

- Accessibility Advisory Committee
  - Goal & Terms of reference
  - Sponsors and members
- Activities over 2006-07
- Going forward

Slide 3

Committee Goal

To facilitate the achievement of the company's Mission Statement as it relates to accessibility:

- To provide a continuously improving west coast travel experience that consistently exceeds customer expectations and reflects the innovation and pride of our employees

Slide 4

Terms of reference – 1

1. Promoting universal design measures to create an inclusive environment
2. Providing a channel for the issues, concerns and views of the representative organizations
3. Channelling accessibility concerns to management
4. Identifying and recommending changes to policies / procedures

Slide 5

Terms of reference – 2

5. Reviewing existing services and facilities
6. Identifying service requirements & remediation measures
7. Identifying communication needs for travelers
8. Supporting training activities
9. Creating community awareness
10. Annual meeting with corporate sponsors

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BCF Corporate sponsors

Capt. George Capacci – Fleet Operations

Mark Collins – Engineering

Corrine Storey – Terminal Operations

Geoff Dickson – Food & Retail Operations

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BCF representation

- Pat Morris – Manager Operational Planning, Fleet Operations (and company lead)
- Barb Britton-Wilson – Director Food & Beverage, Food & Retail Operations
- Roberta Chartier – Manager Customer Service, Customer Care Department
- Judy Cryer – Director Standards, Terminal Operations
- Jeff Davidson – Director Retail Services, Food & Retail Operations
- Bill McCormick - Customer Service Agent, Customer Care
- Bruce Paterson – Fleet Technical Director, Engineering

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External members – 1

- Pat Danforth (Chair)
  - Disability Resource Centre, Victoria
  - Director, Board of BC Coalition of People With Disabilities
- Valerie Thoem
  - Director, BC Coalition of People With Disabilities
- Vivian Garcia / Scott Heron
  - BC Paraplegic Association
- Hugh Mitchell
  - Cdn Hard of Hearing Association – Pres, Victoria Branch
- Ernie Stigant
  - Multiple Sclerosis Society – Capital Region

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External members – 2

- Dawn Day
  - CNIB - Regional Mgr, Victoria
- Mary Kay Kennedy
  - CNIB – Specialist, orientation & mobility
- Jane Sheaff
  - Seniors Serving Seniors – Executive Director
- Albert Ruel
  - Association for the Equality of Blind Canadians – National Director
- Susan Gallagher
  - Association for the Equality of Blind Canadians – Treasurer, Victoria Chapter

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Process activities

1	Promoting universal design measures to create an inclusive environment
2	Provide a channel for the issues, concerns and views of the representative organizations.

3	Channelling accessibility concerns to management.
9	Creating community awareness.
10	Annual meeting with corporate sponsors.

#### Slide 11

##### Process activities

- Meeting activities address these components of the terms of reference

##### Also

- Successful expansion to include new members and additional interests
- Support from BCF management and executive
- Increased knowledge of the interests of the community

#### Slide 12

##### #4 Changes to policies / procedures

- Accessibility Standards
  - Planned as a guidebook, to define requirements in modifications and new construction
  - Working with Barrier Free Design
- Tariff modification
  - For lift-equipped OH vehicles, whenever they travel
- Passenger assistance
  - Pre-booking system to facilitate non-vehicle travel

#### Slide 13

##### #5 Reviewing existing services and facilities

##### Route 1 assessment (Sep 2005)

- Spirit class
- Swartz Bay Terminal
- Ongoing challenges in making changes
  - New prominence for elevator capabilities / dependability

##### BC Disability Games Powell River (July 07)

- Recognised that physical environment was limited
- Enabled local vessel and terminal to manage their solutions through better information, involve staff
- Training – “Superhost for persons with disabilities”

#### Slide 14

##### #6 Service requirements & remediation measures

- Coastal class introduction

- Other terminal and vessel environments
  - Northern vessels
  - New intermediate vessel *Island Sky*
  - *Kuper* modifications
  - *Quinita* modifications

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#7 Communication needs for travelers

- Way-finding information
- Information to support pre-planning
- Pre-travel information / Web information
  - Content
  - Navigating the website
  - Accessibility standards for presentation of information
  - Other formats

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#8 Supporting training activities

Videotel Program

- Worked with Videotel on the production of a video on 'Persons with Limited Mobility'
- Covers daily operations and emergency situations

Next steps

- Assess other programs
- Introduce company-specific and site-specific training
- How to integrate training into ongoing staff training

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Going forward – 1

- Car deck vehicle loading
  - Egress from vehicle, access to elevator, etc
  - Distinguishing different levels of need
- How to provide reasonable accommodation
  - at non-reservation terminals
  - on old / unsuitable facilities
- Development of modular standards for modifications and new construction work

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Going forward – 2

- Identification for individuals
- Training
- Discounts
- Assistance Services
- Signage

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Questions?