

Meeting Details

Date: June 13, 2018
Time: 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Location: BC Ferries Head Office – Suite 500 - 1321 Blanshard Street

Attendance

Public Interest Representatives

Hugh Mitchell, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Les Chan, Disability Resource Centre
Julie Gray, Seniors Serving Seniors
Debbie Yorke, Seniors Serving Seniors
Sandra Jenkins, A/Marnie Essery, Inter-Municipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues

BC Ferries Representatives

Karen Tindall, Director of Customer Care, Customer Care Department
Bruce Paterson, Fleet Technical Director, Engineering
Chris Gauld, Manager, Terminal Standards, Terminal Engineering
Captain Chris Frappell, Marine Superintendent, Vessel Replacement Program
Stephen Nussbaum, Superintendent, Customer Service Standards
Darin Guenette, Manager, Public Affairs
Steve Shardlow, Training Manager, Terminals
Garnet Renning, Customer Service & Sales Representative, Customer Care

Guest

Martene Hartnell, Customer Relations, Customer Care

Regrets

Scott Heron, Co-Chair, Spinal Cord Injury BC
Hanna Leavitt, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians
Mary Ellen Meunier, Seniors Serving Seniors
Marnie Essery, Inter-Municipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues
Pat Danforth, Disability Alliance BC
Barbara Schuster, CNIB
David Carroll, Director, Terminal Construction, Engineering
Jeff Davidson, Director, Retail Services, Food and Retail Operations
Melanie Lucia, Director, Catering and Terminal Operations

Introduction

Co-Chair Karen Tindall welcomed the members of the committee.

Review of Minutes – November 17, 2017 meeting. Minutes approved by the committee.

Action Items for next meeting:

1. Check and see if the standard safety announcements are captioned on vessels with television screens.
Who: Karen Tindall
2. Look into an online form for Hugh to make it easier for his group to share feedback.
Who: Karen Tindall
3. Send Hugh the link for the Swartz Bay terminal development feedback survey.
Who: Martene Hartnell
4. Send an email one month prior to the next meeting to solicit nominations for a new co-chair.
Who: Karen Tindall

Updates from the Public Interest Representatives

Hugh Mitchell

Hugh informed the group that the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association is going through some organizational challenges. He mentioned the wording on the website stating BC Ferries is “fully accessible” is not totally accurate when referring to those who are hard of hearing. Karen is going to check and see if the standard safety announcements are captioned. Stephen Nussbaum said that BC Ferries now has more screen in better locations in terminals, including “Now Boarding” messaging. Karen also said she would look into how Hugh could acquire more feedback from his group, potentially with a feedback form. Karen will also send Hugh the link for the Swartz Bay terminal development feedback survey.

Julie Gray

Seniors Serving Seniors (SSS) is recruiting volunteers to aid those frail and vulnerable seniors leaving the hospital who need companions for general assistance on a short-term basis. Julie explained that support is most needed at the beginning of hospital discharge. SSS began offering a Senior Peer Counselling program which provides emotional support to seniors having a difficult time. Both training programs start in September.

Les Chan

Les shared that his group has voiced some concerns about the size of the DSI card. Karen shared that BC Ferries is moving in the direction of eliminating the physical card in the future; this will involve some negotiations with the government. Hugh suggested an electronic card for the e-wallet on smartphones.

Pat Danforth (update provided by Karen Tindall)

Pat asked Karen to share some customer experiences on her behalf. Pat’s colleague, Elizabeth Lalonde, had some concerns about the lack of braille on the vessels, particularly in the accessible washroom. Karen explained that we are updating our signage package for all ships going into refit; this includes braille and tactile signage. Karen also shared a customer experience where a disabled customer and her dog were loaded onto a Salish Class vessel; this particular customer was upset about being loaded onto a sloped deck, the vehicle exhaust fumes and significant noise levels. Lastly, Karen informed the group about a customer, who has filed a Human Rights complaint regarding his wish to be guaranteed a space on the upper vehicle deck whenever he sails. Karen explained that we can honour upper vehicle deck requests when notice is given at the terminal and conditions allow for it.

Sandra Jenkins

Sandra shared that members of the Inter-Municipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues would like BC Ferries to offer more sailings between Brentwood Bay and Mill Bay, as well as the ability to reserve on this route. Marnie Essery has sent out the Horseshoe Bay and Swartz Bay terminal development surveys to their constituents so that they could provide their feedback. Sandra mentioned she has received some complaints from her constituents regarding accessibility at the Horseshoe Bay foot passenger terminal (difficulties with wheelchair service). Karen explained that with our new reservation system, customers will eventually be able to reserve online for the wheelchair service and specify their needs about accessibility so that we can better assist them. Sandra asked if next April, someone from BC Ferries could speak about how we accommodate persons with disabilities.

Break: 2:15 - 2:30 pm

Updates from BC Ferries

Terminal Update:

Stephen Nussbaum explained that BC Ferries received mostly positive feedback about our wheelchair assistance service; we have only received only 14 negative comments about the service and the rest has been positive or neutral. The current process is to load wheelchair passengers on first and off last. Stephen added that BC Ferries is developing a system for tracking the company's wheelchair inventory. It has been tested at Duke Point and a further trial is expected. BC Ferries has also ordered two motorized wheelchair movers for our wheelchairs. Les Chan suggested BC Ferries should make the free services for persons with disabilities (e.g. wheelchair service) more obvious on our website. Karen said we're looking into it because we want people to pre-book the wheelchair service.

We are aware of an inconsistency with elevator placement for those vehicles requiring access to an elevator. Regarding the passenger restriction on the lower vehicle deck, Stephen explained that we can normally accommodate if the sailing is not full.

There has also been a trial in Prince Rupert, where customers can utilize fold-down seats on the trestle to have a seat/take a break while making their way onto the vessel.

Vessel Development Update:

Bruce Paterson provided an update on the upcoming vessel replacements and mid-life upgrades (see PowerPoint presentation). The next ten years will be busy for ship replacement.

Minor 44/47 Class Vessels:

They have officially been named the "Island" Class. BC Ferries is working on plans for this new vessel class expected to be delivered in 2019. Island Class vessels are intended for short routes; they will be double-ended and will have an accessible passenger lounge on the main car deck. There will be chair lift systems fitted on these vessels. They will have diesel generators and lithium ion batteries. The plan is to replace 2 Bowen Class vessels (Mayne Queen and Bowen Queen) with 4 Island Class vessels, resulting in an increase in service. Overall, there is the potential for 12 minor vessels to be built in the same style. The end goal is to have zero-emission vessels which are fully electric; BC Ferries is in discussion with BC Hydro about this.

New Major Vessels Project:

We are working to replace 5 major "C" Class vessels. They are expected to be like the Coastal Class vessels, but larger. These vessels will have a higher ratio of passenger seating. They will be hybrid/ powered by Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), with low underwater-radiated noise. For the future of our fleet, we are developing a universal design and will consult committee members for input.

Route 28:

Last year, the Provincial Government gave approval to reinstate this route which had previously been modified/reduced due to Government Service Level Reductions. BC Ferries purchased a used vessel to operate on the route, which we later named the *Northern Sea Wolf*. The vessel will sail 2-3 times per week from Port Hardy to the mid-coast. It was expected to be in service the summer of 2018. The *Northern Sea Wolf* has one elevator from the main vehicle deck to the lounge and will have a chair lift from the lounge to the sundeck. It will have Scala TV screens, LSA slides and cabins for crew but not for passengers.

Spirit of British Columbia (SOBC) and Spirit of Vancouver Island (SOVI)

The SOBC returned to service on June 6, 2018 following her mid-life upgrade in Poland. The SOVI will be out of service to travel to receive her mid-life upgrade between September 2018 and June 2019. On board these vessels, there is an induction loop in the cafeteria which includes the Chief Steward's office, the meal selection area, the cashier's station, the row of seats near the cashier and the block of seats in the middle of the cafeteria.

Terminal Development Update:

Chris Gauld updated the committee on the Horseshoe Bay and Swartz Bay terminal development feedback surveys; 850 surveys were completed in 3 weeks. The second rounds of engagement will take place in July and September 2018. BC Ferries is looking at universal vessel design criteria for accessibility; there is a particular 'Rick Hansen' certification standard' that BC Ferries is looking into. Some challenges to consider during the design process are the building and bridge codes and Transport Canada guidelines for vessels.

Other Business:

Darin Guenette informed the committee that the communities are excited about the new terminals. The Terminal Development Plan includes upgrades to all 47 of BC Ferries' terminals.

On May 30, 2018, Darin worked with DMI TV on some accessibility and disability television programming. Darin and the DMI TV representative, who was blind, walked through the Swartz Bay terminal, and discussed accessibility, possible improvements and learnings. Darin and the representative then sailed to Tsawwassen. The television programming was themed around travelling and accessibility.

Co-Chair Position:

Karen proposed sending out an email to solicit nominations for a new co-chair. She will send the email in advance of the next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned 3:30pm

Next Meeting Date:

TBD