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Releases

Labour Organizations Call on BC Ferries to Build New Vessels in BC

New Westminster – BC Ferries announcement that it will build three new Intermediate class vessels was bittersweet, as BC Ferries once again opened the procurement process to international shipyards.

"We have been building ships on the west coast for over 100 years. We have the infrastructure, we have the facilities and we have the trades' people to do the job," said Lee Loftus, President of the BC Building Trades Union. "If Canada starts here, then the jobs need to start here instead of infrastructure funding for foreign countries."

BC Ferries announced earlier today it would build two new vessels capable of carrying 145 vehicles and up to 600 passengers to replace the Queen of Burnaby and the Queen of Nanaimo, along with a third vessel capable of carrying 125 vehicles and 600 passengers to provide refit relief and augment peak and shoulder season service.

“Our members are ready, willing and able to do the work to build these replacement vessels,” said George MacPherson, President of the BC Shipyard General Workers Federation. “On one hand, the provincial government lobbies the federal government to ensure ships are built in BC, but it refuses to do the same when it comes to BC Ferries.”

"The last major procurement saw BC Ferries sending $542 million overseas to build three Super-C class vessels in Germany," said Tom Sigurdson, Executive Director, BC Building Trades. "In the face of a looming domestic skilled trades' shortage, they have decided to once again open the process to foreign shipyards instead of providing jobs and training opportunities here in BC."

Labour unions were disappointed that the announcement by BC Ferries clearly welcomed proposals from international shipyards because it limits the ability to provide local training and apprenticeship opportunities for British Columbians.

“Almost fifty years ago we built the original vessels, surely some 50 years later, we can build the replacements as well,” noted B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair. Sinclair said the province can’t afford to give away good paying jobs that the shipbuilding industry provides. “British Columbians pay every day for the operations of BC Ferries; so it should be British Columbians who first benefit from any shipbuilding contracts.”

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