

Transportation Update

Town of Fogo Island

March 29, 2012

Mayor Speaks on Fogo Island Ferry Service

Mayor Gerard Foley, on behalf of the Council of the Town of Fogo Island, wants residents to be assured that they are working to maintain the best possible ferry service.

“Council is in constant contact with the Department of Transportation, Marine Services, and our MHA, the Honourable Derrick Dalley, about the ferry service.”

“It is unfortunate that damage to the rudder has taken the MV Captain Earl W. Winsor out of service at this time of year. The crew of the Beaumont Hamel with assistance from the Coast Guard has been able to maintain service despite heavy ice conditions.”

“Recent events, such as the two emergency medical evacuations in one night, demonstrate how vulnerable our ferry service is, and how quickly it can become stressed by events over which no one has any control.”

“The Transportation Committee and Council have been lobbying the government for improvements to the service, and have been promised a return to the summer schedule as soon as ice conditions permit.”

The Provincial Transportation Department has recently announced the temporary closure of the ticket booth in Farewell, due to budget restraints. Council opposes this move, citing further delays in ticketing and loading, especially with the smaller relief vessel.

“Council had lobbied hard and long for the improved ticketing process, and most recently for further improvements in traffic control and parking at the Farewell terminal. Transportation’s decision to



discontinue the service at this time, with the possibility of re-instating it during peak summer periods, is a serious step backwards. This will only create further confusion among travelers and cause further delays in loading. We have urged Transportation to re-consider this cut, and are fully supported by our MHA in this regard.”

A Council delegation met with Transportation Minister Hedderson in St. John’s at the end of January.

“We are confident that the interests of the residents of Fogo Island are very much in the forefront with the Minister. He and his staff are well aware of the challenges facing travelers, and of the vital link the ferry forms for medical travel, commerce and tourism.” (continued...)

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Items discussed during the latest meeting with the Minister included:

- Improving communications protocols
- Additional boat and extending runs for summer season
- Replacement vessel for the Winsor
- Ticket Booth in Farewell and needed facility improvements to deal with traffic flow and waiting space problems
- Summer Schedule extension
- The 30-minute rule and its application and a reallocation of spaces for Change Islands.
- Water Supply at Man-o-War Cove
- Emergency Callouts and alternatives for med-evacs.
- Cleanliness of the vessel

“Minister Hedderson has committed to making improvements to the service, dependent of course upon budget availability. All the government Ministers that we met with in St. John’s had the same message — this will be a year of spending restraint — but this has not deterred the Council from continuing to lobby for improvements.”

Residents are reminded that rules have been established for the safe, orderly operation of the ferry system.

These rules relate to procedures for lineups and are designed to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all travelers.

Your ferry crews are doing their best to deal with less than ideal operating conditions.

Please remember to be patient and courteous, and everyone will benefit.

“It is anticipated that a decision on a replacement vessel will be made this spring, and Council stressed the need for having the Winsor replaced sooner than later, even if this



means acquiring a vessel from a shipyard not in Canada. It is not acceptable that Fogo Island suffer delays from continued equipment breakdowns.”

“As an amalgamated Council, we will continue to lobby the Provincial Government for improved services. In addition to our meetings and ongoing conversation with Transportation, we will soon meet again with Central Health to review the issues related to medical evacuations and the disruption this creates, especially for persons with scheduled treatments and procedures and specialist appointments off the Island.”

“We are confident that by continuing to work together and with the cooperation of the residents of Fogo Island and Change Islands who rely on the ferry service, solutions will be found and we can continue to move forward together.”