

B.C. Ferries looking to lower fuel surcharge

Jonathan Fowlie

Vancouver Sun

Friday, September 19, 2008

VICTORIA - B.C. Ferries says it hopes to lower a fuel surcharge from the price of its tickets by the end of this year.

On Thursday, B.C. Ferries CEO David Hahn said a drop in world fuel prices has made it possible to contemplate the change, and that his staff is looking into how much the fee can come down.

"We were pretty aggressive in trying to get [the fuel surcharge] when the price was \$140 a barrel," Hahn said Thursday.

"I think we should be just as aggressive in seeing how fast we can roll it back," he added.

"Even if it's only a partial knock down, every little bit helps."

Oil prices rose dramatically earlier this year, reaching a high of about \$147 (US) a barrel in July. Prices have dropped off since returning to below \$100 per barrel.

B.C. Ferries introduced a range of fuel surcharges on August 1, saying the new levy was needed to offset the dramatic rise.

On major routes, the surcharge was 10.3 per cent. It was 9.2 per cent on the Horseshoe Bay - Langdale route and 17.6 per cent on the minor routes servicing the Southern and Northern Gulf Islands.

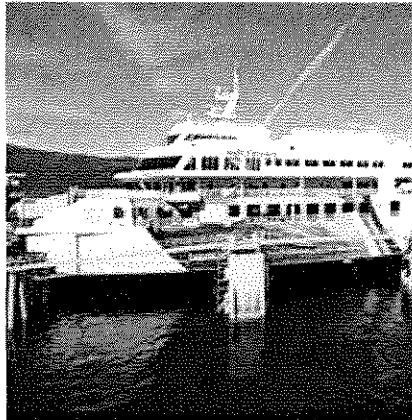
On Thursday, Hahn said his organization has already begun speaking with the B.C. Ferry Commissioner about the reduction of the surcharge, but could not say exactly when a decision would be made.

He added that B.C. Ferries is still recouping fuel costs from before the surcharge took effect and said his team will have to determine how to alter the surcharge so it is fair for both passengers and the corporation.

"From January to July we had no fuel surcharge and the price went crazy from under \$100 a barrel to \$140," he said.

"During that period of time we didn't have a fuel surcharge mechanism therefore we were paying more and not getting the money back."

jfowlie@vancouver.sun.com



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The newest boat in the fleet, the Coastal Celebration, which will enter service on the Swartz Bay - Tsawwassen route mid-October.