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Study identifies Homeport potential for niche market cruises, province provides funding for infrastructure needs

SAINT JOHN (NB) - A study to establish Saint John's potential as a homeport, recommends that, in the near future, Port Saint John is best suited to welcome expedition-class ships.

The study, conducted by Dillon Consulting, examined Saint John's strategic position on the Canada-New England itinerary, and evaluated its tourism offerings and the many additional requirements necessary in order for a port to be able to offer a cruise line the option of homeporting ships.

Based on the myriad requirements, the study concluded that Port Saint John is currently well-positioned to welcome expedition-class ships. These are niche market vessels, they are often a higher-end product offering, and carry between 50 to 200 passengers, plus crew members. In addition, expedition cruises are often geared toward adventurers with specific interests in mind, like exploring nature,

"Port Saint John already has an excellent reputation in the cruise industry. We also have excellent partnerships in our tourism sector, including our long-standing partnership with the New Brunswick Department of Tourism. When these strong attributes are added to 25 years of testimonies from passengers praising the destination, our potential to together contribute to tourism in this region keeps growing. Attracting expedition-class ships to homeport here gives us one more avenue to explore in the future," Peter Gaulton Chairman of Port Saint John, said.

The average passenger visiting the city spends between \$60 and \$80 during a port of call visit. With a homeport, passengers spend up to twice this amount. The majority of passengers visiting homeports stay at least one night in a local hotel, while also spending money on meals and other incidentals.

In order to welcome expedition-class ships however, a special gangway and/or floating platform is required to accommodate this size of ship. This type of platform is required because of the range of the daily tide range in Saint John.

"I believe that we have a number of opportunities to take the next step with the cruising sector at Port Saint John," said Trevor Holder, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture. "This study has highlighted some very real and achievable ways to get into new cruising business opportunities but also some challenges. To help overcome these initial challenges, over the next three years, our government will provide \$100,000 in funding to the port, each year, to help address the immediate infrastructure needs of the Port.

Port Saint John and the department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture are currently working together to promote the port as a home-porting option for expedition type ships.

Port Saint John's 2014 cruise season begins on July 5<sup>th</sup>. Highlights this season include a record number of double-ship days, seven inaugural calls and the 1000<sup>th</sup> ship call.

*Port Saint John is Eastern Canada's largest port by tonnage and has a diverse cargo base, including dry and liquid bulk, break bulk, containers, and cruise.*

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