
News Release

MP Byrne demands answers from Marine Atlantic

Ottawa (April 7, 2009) – Liberal Member of Parliament, Gerry Byrne, said today that Marine Atlantic must provide clarity on their operational plans and user fees for the constitutionally mandated gulf ferry service.

“Will the newly acquired Marine Atlantic ferry, The Atlantic Vision, be placed on the constitutionally guaranteed and protected gulf ferry service during the summer months or will it be used on the North Sydney to Argentia operations?”, Byrne asked.

“There are good reasons to ask this question. The Atlantic Vision appears designed for moving passengers and vehicles much longer distances than between North Sydney and Port aux Basques. It has limited seating for day crossings and despite absolute assurances from Marine Atlantic officials that the vessel can successfully dock in Port aux Basques during periods of high winds, evidence points to the contrary. The new vessel appears to have lesser wind tolerances while docking than the current fleet made up of the Smallwood and the Caribou. That may mean that Port aux Basques is technically excluded as a port for the Atlantic Vision for much of the normal year.”

Byrne further questioned what happened to the commitment to offer free travel on Marine Atlantic ferry services to veterans and members of the Canadian Armed Forces in 2009.

“A commitment was made to our vets and to our soldiers and it should be honoured”, Byrne said. “In order for that commitment to be real and valuable, details should be provided on this promotion well before now. In many cases, travel plans have now been made for this summer and, because there was no certainty about when Marine Atlantic would be offering this free travel, they do not include Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a real shame.”

Byrne also said the cost of using Marine Atlantic is steadily increasing beyond the capacity of users to pay.

“The new rate schedule for the Atlantic Vision goes well beyond what is reasonable or necessary for a service that is guaranteed to us under the constitution”, Byrne said.

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