



# *Island Vessel Replacement Consultation Document*

*March 2007*

  
Newfoundland  
Labrador

Department of  
Transportation and Works

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## Message From The Minister

As the Minister of Transportation and Works I am committed to the development of a sustainable, safe and reliable transportation system for the province.

As part of that process, Government engaged BMT Fleet Technology to conduct a review of the ferry services operating on the island portion of the province. However, before accepting or rejecting any of their recommendations we would like to hear from you, the users of these services.

A separate review of the ferry services for Labrador is being conducted as part of the development of a Sustainable Transportation Plan for Labrador. Thus, this document will be limited to those for the Island.

The purpose of this consultation document is to provoke thought and encourage feedback as we seek your opinions regarding the BMT report. The input we receive will assist Government to determine the most appropriate ferry service to effectively meet the needs of the users throughout the Island.

The first stage of our Vessel Replacement Plan is already underway. In keeping with our Blueprint commitment to build new vessels here in the Province, employing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Government has issued a Request for Expression of Interest from shipbuilding contractors within the province to build and supply two new auto-passenger ferries for the intra-provincial service. We hope to have this contract let in the coming months.

I encourage stakeholders to provide their input in the decision-making process, as together we shape the future of the island's provincial ferry services as part of an overall sustainable, safe and reliable transportation system for the province. I look forward to seeing your thoughts through the attached feedback form or through written submissions.



**John Hickey, MHA**  
Lake Melville District  
Minister of Transportation and Works

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## IMPORTANCE OF MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Reliable and safe transportation systems are important to communities in terms of their economic success and the quality of life within a community. Transportation infrastructure facilitates economic development and it is essential to investment, productivity and competitiveness. The quality of life within a community is also highly dependent on transportation as residents are dependant on it to access quality goods and services, including health and social services.

The provincial ferry system is very important to Newfoundland and Labrador, and isolated communities. In many cases the ferry system is a community's only link to the mainland and, as such, is the sole means of transporting people and goods into and out of the community. Therefore, it is apparent that certain communities and islands around the province are heavily dependent on a safe and reliable ferry service.



MV Flanders

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## CURRENT ISLAND PROVINCIAL FERRY SERVICE

There are currently fourteen vessels that provide ferry service to the island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador. Nine vessels are Government owned and operated: Captain Earl W. Winsor, Nonia, Flanders, Beaumont Hamel, Gallipoli, Hamilton Sound, Sound of Islay, Inch Arran and the Island Joiner. Five vessels are privately owned and operated under contract to the Provincial Government: Winchester, Terra Nova, Marine Voyager, Northern Seal, and the Marine Coaster.



The Department of Transportation and Works engaged BMT Fleet Technology Limited to conduct an analysis of various aspects of a vessel replacement strategy for the ferry services around the island portion of the province. This included both services operated by the Province and those provided by private sector operators under contract with the Province.

Route	Communities Serviced	Ferry
A	Bell Island Portugal Cove	Beaumont Hamel / Flanders
B	St. Brendan's Burnside	Hamilton Sound
C	Fogo Island Farewell	Capt. Earl W. Winsor
D	Change Island Farewell	Capt. Earl W. Winsor
E	Long Island Pilley's Island	Island Joiner
F	Little Bay Islands Shoal Arm	Inch Arran
K	Lapoile Grand Bruit Rose Blanche Burgeo	Marine Coaster
L	Ramea Burgeo Grey River	Gallipoli
M	Grey River Francois Burgeo McCallum Hermitage	Marine Voyager
N	Gaultois Hermitage McCallum	Terra Nova
O	Rencontre Bay L'Argent Pools Cove	Northern Seal
P	South East Bight Petite Forte	Winchester
Swing Vessels		Nonia/ Sound of Islay

## BMT REPORT

*The focus of the BMT review was those ferries which provide service to the islands and isolated communities surrounding the island portion of the province. The report included:*

- ☞ Surveys and life expectancy assessments for the vessels now in service (Government owned only);
- ☞ Level of service analyses, including projections into future years based on demographic and economic analyses;
- ☞ Identification of future fleet requirements;
- ☞ Sourcing of replacement vessels, both used vessels and new builds and;
- ☞ Assessing service delivery models, including both private and public sector approaches.

The vessel surveys conducted by BMT confirmed that the provincial ferry fleet contains many vessels in urgent need of replacement. These vessels in need of replacement are all in excess of 30 years of age. Costs in terms of maintenance and operations on vessels of this age will continue to increase whereas the level of service will decrease.

According to the BMT report, the services currently provided by the provincial ferry system are well matched to the needs of the communities they service. This applies to both the capacities of the vessels operating on each route and to the service frequency. BMT compared Newfoundland and Labrador with similar services in other parts of and the world and found that Newfoundland and Labrador services are comparable to those in other



jurisdictions. This applies to both the Bell Island commuter service and also to the community services to both the large and smaller islands around the coast. The BMT report further indicates that, overall utilization levels are quite low and in some cases indicate that service frequencies could be reduced. Reducing the frequency of the service would assist in reducing crew workload and allow more time for planned maintenance activities. Although levels of ferry utilization have not declined as rapidly as have the population in these communities, ferry utilization can be expected to fall if current population trends continue. This was taken into consideration by BMT in identifying their recommended capacities for replacement ferries.



MV Island Joiner

The BMT report suggested changes to the current ferry routes. One such recommendation was to Little Bay Islands and Long Island services. The report suggested that these two services should be combined into a three or four point service. A reconfiguration would reduce the frequency of crossings to the level currently in effect on the Fogo Island – Change Islands service, which also operates on a three point configuration.

BMT also identified an option for modifications to the south coast services, in which the majority of

services are currently passenger/freight and are provided by private contractors. BMT's analysis reported that tourism and other economic development might be assisted by providing a more integrated service capable of taking both passengers and vehicles. With regards to reorganization on the south coast, the Gallipoli would continue to service Ramea via Burgeo. However, all other ports would be serviced by two vessels which would travel the full south coast in opposite directions. Exercising this option would involve a significant investment to upgrade both vessel and wharf infrastructure. Changing the configuration of this service would also result in a change in the frequency of the current service provided by the ferries. How this vessel configuration would affect services to individual communities would also require further investigation.

There were further recommendations for new vessels on Route B: St. Brendan's – Burnside, Route C/D: Fogo Island-Change Islands, Route O: Rencontre – Pool's Cove – Bay L'Argent, Route P: South East Bight – Petite Forte, as well as a new swing vessel.



MV Gallipoli

With respect to the overall configuration BMT suggested the overall level of service could be maintained with one less vessel.

## BMT's FUTURE FLEET RECOMMENDATION

Route	Communities Serviced	Proposed Vessel Size
B	St. Brendan's	1 Small Pass/Auto /Freight
C/D	Fogo Island - Change Islands	1 Large Pass/Auto /Freight + 1 Small (Summer)
E/F	Long Island/Little Bay Islands	1 Medium Pass/Auto /Freight
K-N	Western South Coast	2 Small Pass Only
O	Rencontre – Pools Cove – Bay L'Argent	1 Small Pass Only
P	South East Bight - Petite Forte	1 Small Pass Only
	Swing	1 Small Pass (Shared with route D)

## KEY ISSUES RAISED IN THE BMT REPORT AND/OR BY COMMUNITIES

### Bell Island - Portugal Cove

*Reliable two vessel service with adequate parking and wharf facilities.*

Bell Island is the largest of all provincial ferry services, transporting approximately 500,000 passengers and approximately 250,000 vehicles per year. With regards to this type of high volume service, adequate parking and wharf facilities are needed. However, it has been brought to the attention of Government that the current parking and wharf facilities are inadequate. In response to this concern, Government is

currently upgrading the wharf structure on the Portugal Cove side of the service as well as increasing the area for parking.

Another concern for the users of this service is the reliability of the service. A large percentage of the users are commuters who depend on a consistent transportation service to and from the mainland each and every day for work and school. Their main concern is having a reliable swing vessel to replace the Beaumont Hamel and the Flanders when either is out of service. The BMT report proposed a new swing vessel be built which will have the passenger and vehicle capacity needed in order to be an adequate substitute for either the Beaumont Hamel or the Flanders.

### St Brendan's - Burnside

*New boat and reliable service.*

St. Brendan's is currently serviced by the Hamilton Sound, a 38-year-old vessel which as of late has been subject to frequent break downs and costly repairs. A situation occurred where there was no replacement vessel to replace the Hamilton Sound and St. Brendan's was without service. When situations such as these occur there are safety and service issues which arise. To ensure that situations like this do not arise again, BMT proposes that a new vessel be built which will meet the specifications outlined in the BMT report, based on projected traffic levels. This will ensure a reliable service with sufficient vehicle and passenger capacities.

## **Fogo Island - Change Islands - Farewell**

*Vessel size and an increase in the number of trips per day.*

Fogo Island - Change Islands ferry service is the second largest provincial ferry service, with the majority of the traffic travelling between Fogo Island and the mainland. Being the second largest service requires a reliable and efficient transportation service to and from the islands. With regard to accommodating the current traffic levels, the Winsor has the capacity. There are very few times during the year when the Winsor reaches capacity and for the periods at which the Winsor does reach capacity the overflow is accommodated by the Winsor making more roundtrips per day. This increase in runs per day continues until all traffic has been transported - either onto or off of the islands. The increase in runs per day discontinues when there is no longer a need for the increased capacity. Projections made in the BMT report suggested that the level of traffic on this service will either be maintained or will decrease in the future. Therefore, the current passenger and vehicle capacity of the Winsor is sufficient for the foreseeable future.

The recommended changes to this service, as outlined in the BMT report, require the replacement of the Winsor with a vessel configured with similar capacities. It is also suggested that the new swing vessel proposed, should be placed on this service during the summer months in order to accommodate times with peaks in traffic flows. The option proposed by BMT was to replace the Winsor with one large vessel operating all year round and another small vessel (swing vessel)

to provide sufficient capacity during the summer months.



MV Captain Earl Winsor

## **Green Bay (Long Island and Little Bay Islands)**

*Causeway/Bridge and reliable service*

Long Island ferry users have expressed interest in having a causeway to the mainland. Although it is only 0.5 km from Pilley's Island to Long Island, the cost of a Causeway/Bridge is estimated at \$26 million given very deep water in the channel. However, in considering the option of combining the Long Island service with the Little Bay Islands service, the combined service becomes the most feasible. Therefore the recommendation by BMT is for these two services to reorganize into a three point service so that one vessel can service both islands from a common mainland terminal.

With regards to reliability of the current service, there have been some recent issues regarding break downs and lack of replacement vessels. In order to ensure reliability of the service BMT recommends new vessel(s) be built to service these islands.

## South Coast

*Newer vessels and reliable service.*

The vessels currently servicing the western south coast of the island are older, ranging from 42 – 44 years old. As reported by BMT, vessels of this age are not only unreliable but are also expensive to maintain. Therefore, it is not only in the best interest of the people using this service but it is also in the best interest of Government, financially, to replace these rapidly deteriorating vessels. The Marine Voyager, Marine Coaster, and Terra Nova have all been recommended for replacement. Further to this, BMT suggested that a new configuration could be put into place which would reduce the three vessels down to two. If this proposed reconfiguration was to be implemented the two vessels would travel the length of the south coast during the course of a full round trip. This new service would provide enhanced service to some communities, while maintaining the level of service at others. If this proposed arrangement was not implemented then three vessels would need to be built to replace the three recommended to be decommissioned.

The Northern Seal, a 28 year old vessel which provides service to Rencontre via Pools Cove and Bay L'Argent, has also been recommended by BMT to be replaced. Although this vessel has provided reliable service in the past, BMT suggests that due to its age this vessel will not be able to maintain the current standard of service without incurring costly repairs and operating costs. BMT also makes a similar argument for the replacement of the Winchester, a 38 year old vessel which

services South East Bight via Petite Forte.

### *Roll-on/Roll-off service*

Reconfiguration on the south coast to a two vessel service with passenger and vehicle capacities would involve a considerable investment by Government to upgrade wharves and facilities to accommodate a roll-on/roll-off service. The community of Gaultois, in particular, has expressed interest in a roll-on/roll-off service.

From a tourism perspective, traveling the south coast is extremely difficult with the current configuration of the ferries and their corresponding schedules. Travelling the length of the south coast requires complex planning, takes the better part of a week, and is only an option for backpackers. BMT reports that service reliability issues increases the risk of being stranded or having to back track if connections are missed. Therefore having a two vessel configuration may potentially lead to increases in tourism in these communities.

Moving to a two vessel configuration would also result in a decrease in frequency of service to the communities. Therefore, a more in-depth analysis would need to be carried out to determine the extent to which this change in schedule would affect service.

Another suggestion put forward by the Coast of Bays Corporation is the implementation of a roll-on/roll-off service across Fortune Bay capable of carrying approximately ten vehicles. The roll-on/roll-off service would allow tourists and residents to travel along the

Coast of Bays and return to their point of origin.

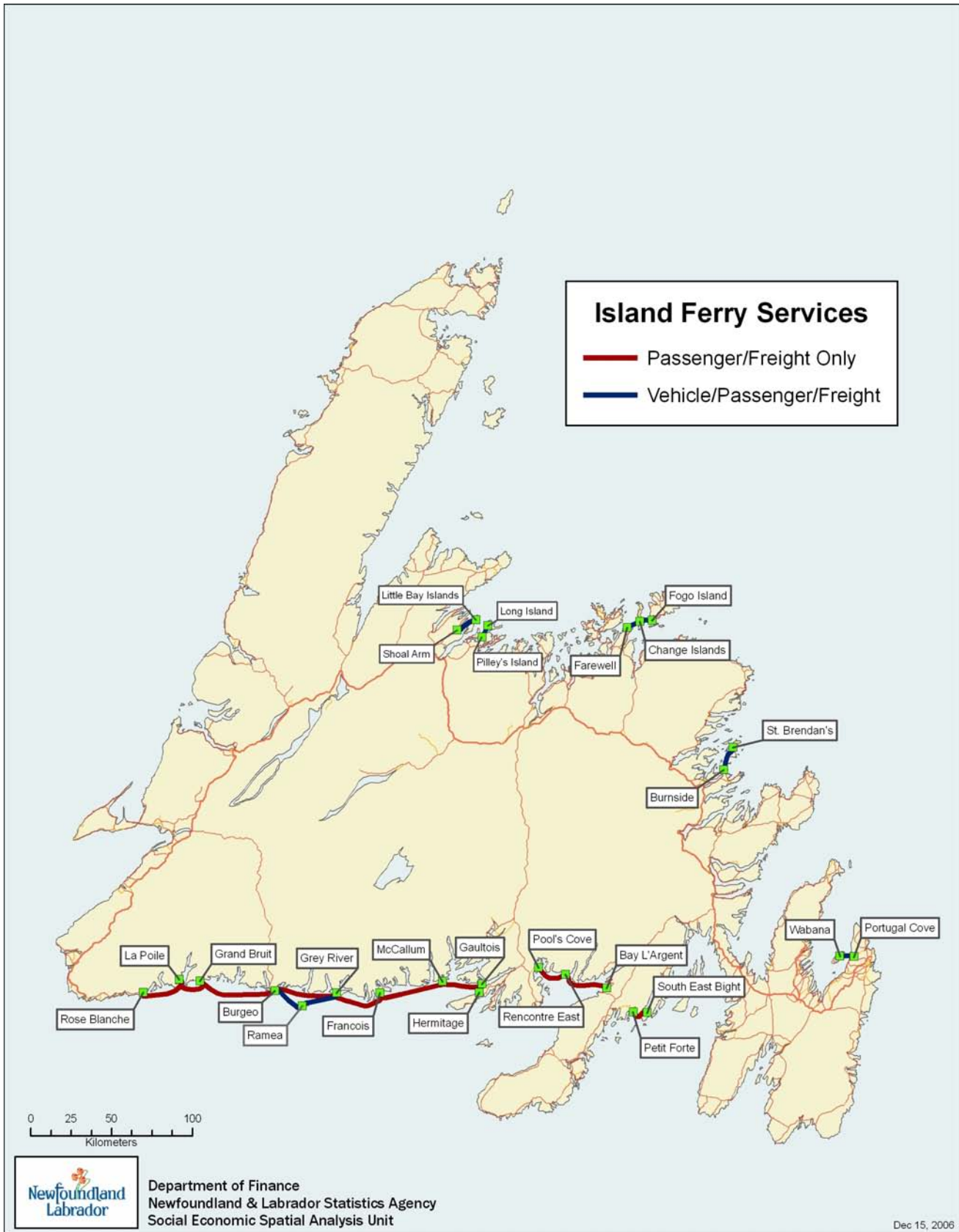
**Ramea - Grey River - Burgeo**  
*Reliable replacement vessel.*

Currently Ramea is serviced by the Gallipoli. The Gallipoli is one of the newest vessels in the provincial fleet. It is currently only 20 years old and was not recommended by BMT to be replaced. The major concern from residents regarding this service is their

need to have a reliable replacement vessel for when the Gallipoli is taken off the run for its annual refits. The ferry service is the only transportation to and from the island. Thus, with regards to health and safety issues as well as quality of life, there needs to be a consistent and dependable ferry service to and from Ramea. As previously stated, the BMT report does suggest a solution to deal with this issue by recommending the construction of a new swing vessel.



MV Inch Arran



## *Your Input is Important to us!*

Government has reviewed the BMT report. However, before accepting or rejecting any of the recommendations we would like to have input from you, the users of these services. With this in mind, we would like you to tell us who you are, what region you are from (i.e. which ferry service(s) you use), your concerns and solutions, and any other thoughts you have regarding the proposed vessel replacement plan.

We invite individuals and organizations to complete the attached Feedback Form or forward their written submissions to the Department of Transportation and Works at the address below. Additionally, the Department will be consulting with the Ferry Users Committee in each area and other key stakeholders over the coming weeks to obtain input to assist the future development of the provincial ferry services on the island portion of our province.

Please provide us with your input! We look forward to receiving your comments.

Vessel Replacement Plan  
Policy and Planning Division  
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Fax: 1-709-729-3418

Email: [vrp@gov.nl.ca](mailto:vrp@gov.nl.ca)

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## Feedback Form

1. Please start by telling us who you are and what ferry service(s) you use.

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2. What do you feel are some of the benefits of the current ferry service(s) in your area?

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3. What do you feel are some of the disadvantages of the current ferry service(s) in your area?

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4. How frequently do you travel on the ferries in your area?

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5. Have you encountered any issues while traveling on the ferries in your area, and if so, what are they?

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6. What economic and social change do you see occurring in your area over the next 25 years that would affect the demand on ferry services?

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7. After reading this consultation document, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed changes to your service with regard to proposed replacement vessel(s)? *(Answer only if Applicable)*

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8. After reading this consultation document, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed changes to your service with regard to roll-on/roll-off capabilities? *(Answer only if Applicable)*

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9. After reading this consultation document, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed changes to your service with regard to combined services? *(Answer only if Applicable)*

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10. If you were to institute changes to the ferry service(s) in your area what would they be and why?

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11. Are there any other comments that you would like to share with us?

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**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO RESPOND.**

**WE APPRECIATE YOUR INPUT!**

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