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## **BC PORTS CONTINUE TO GAIN STRENGTH IN CRUISE VISITS**

*Another record year in Victoria and Nanaimo makes cruise season highest yet.*

Vancouver, B.C. - The 2006 cruise season in British Columbia contributed more than \$1.25 billion to the BC economy and almost \$90 million in direct and indirect taxes. Almost 1.3 million passengers visited BC ports as 2006 continued the trend of growth for ports along the West Coast while the overall strength of the industry remained consistent with 2005.

“We continue to see a diversification of cruise products in the region with much more exposure for ports throughout British Columbia,” said Greg Wirtz, Chair of Cruise BC and Manager, Trade Development, Cruise for Vancouver Port Authority. “While Vancouver faces stiff competition for homeport business from U.S. ports, the overall market continues to remain vibrant.”

Highlights of the 2006 cruise season, lasting from May to October, include important new benchmarks for several BC cruise destinations:

- The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority hosted 182 ships calls – the highest number of port calls yet. With 334,570 revenue passengers 2006 represented an 8% increase in passengers over 2005.
- The Port of Nanaimo was delighted with this year’s passenger totals, representing a 28% increase over 2005. Expectations for 2007 are high: “The response and support from Royal Caribbean Cruise Line and Celebrity Cruises has been phenomenal and we are very pleased that they are nominating 15 port calls for 2007,” said Bill Mills of the Nanaimo Port Authority. Nanaimo received 33 cruise visits from large and pocket cruises with over 20,000 passengers passing through the Port during the 2006 season.
- While a last minute change in itineraries created a decline for the Port of Prince Rupert, Business Development Manager Shaun Stevenson was optimistic that numbers would again be on the rise in 2007. “The Northland Cruise Terminal has received very high marks from cruise personnel and the expanded shore excursion programs continue to be popular with passengers.”
- Vancouver Port Authority recorded 837,900 revenue passengers (calculation based on a new formula – statistics backgrounder available upon request) 253 vessel calls through the Port of Vancouver in 2006. Forecasts for 2007 through 2010 indicate that these numbers will climb back to levels of over 1,000,000 revenue passengers. “The cruise lines continue to work on the best itineraries for their passengers and Vancouver has always rated high in terms of passenger satisfaction,” said Dayna Miller, Director of Sales, Travel Trade & Cruise, Tourism Vancouver.

- With the completion of Campbell River's new terminal in October, 2006, Teresa Davis, Tourism Campbell River and Region and Jodee Dick, Campbell River Indian Band, have been working hard to secure commitments for the 2007 season. "We continue to meet with cruise line representatives to discuss opportunities in 2007," said Davis. "Campbell River has many attributes that are very appealing to the cruise lines and, with our new dock now complete, we see it as only a matter of time before we're able to confirm port calls."
- Recognizing that building a cruise industry does not happen overnight, Port Alberni is satisfied that they are making in-roads with cruise line representatives and continue to market their destination as one of the only stops on the west-side of Vancouver Island. "Even though we didn't have a port visit in 2006, we continue to host cruise passengers during their Vancouver Island ports of call. Our shore excursions have been very successful and we're looking forward to working with cruise lines to incorporate more experiences within Port Alberni as well as being added as a stop on itineraries."

The 2006 cruise season again featured Celebrity Cruises' vessel Mercury and new itineraries that focussed on British Columbia destinations. The itineraries included ports of call at Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, and Prince Rupert and have received high praise from Celebrity representatives. Last year's survey of passengers aboard these cruises demonstrated top marks for BC ports and destinations, with nine out of 10 passengers rating their overall cruise experience at 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 as poor and 5 as excellent). Nearly 80% of respondents indicated that their experience generally exceeded their expectations.

"Preliminary research for the 2006 sailings show similar trends in passenger satisfaction," said Wirtz. "This research will be used to help us continue to develop Canada's West Coast with BC ports gaining in popularity – both with cruise line representatives and cruise passengers."

Formed in 2002, Cruise BC Association is a partnership between BC ports, destination marketing organizations, Western Economic Diversification Canada and the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts. Working together and collaboratively with cruise lines, Cruise BC has been successful in developing the tremendous potential that exists to make Canada's Inside Passage and BC cruise ports world class destinations.

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