



## Halifax ferry says 2012, Yarmouth insists 'next year'

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One of two Canada-based efforts to restore ferry service between New England and Nova Scotia is officially abandoning hopes of a 2011 season, while the second insists that next year can happen and expects to open proposals after a 4 p.m. deadline today.

Scotia Cruises, which until recently had said it was "moving forward" with 2011 service, is backing off that deadline and has updated its website to look toward 2012.

"We're 100 percent for 2012," said Bruce McNeil, head of Canadian operations for Scotia Cruises, in an interview Thursday.

McNeil said the company's investment group had pushed to start service between Halifax and New England next summer, but recent feasibility studies had indicated that there is not time to successfully establish and market the service.

"It's just not economically feasible," he said.

The Halifax-to-Portland cruise ferry, expected to



carry about 1,500 passengers and 460 vehicles on its 20-hour crossing, is the longer of two routes being considered. The other route from Yarmouth NS to New England — presumably Portland — is shorter but links to Yarmouth with a population of about 7,000, vs. the Halifax population of nearly 400,000.

McNeil said that difference of "bringing you from one major city to another" is a major reason his group expects to continue with its effort even if the Yarmouth route launches, which he doubts.

"I do wish them the best of luck," said McNeil of the Yarmouth proposal. But, he added, "I don't think it will happen in 2011."

Meanwhile, the Yarmouth Industrial Commission is expecting at least five companies to submit proposals before today's deadline. Proposal guidelines called for service to begin next summer.



After decades of consistent ferry service between Nova Scotia and Portland, that link was broken when the Bay Ferries company last fall stopped running the high-speed Cat. The high-speed ferry had replaced the Scotia Prince, which had been a fixture in the community until it stopped operating in 2004.

While the new proposals would restore daily service, they would not offer high-speed crossings. Instead, the proposals are for cruise ship style operations with amenities like spas, gambling and entertainment.

While the absence of a ferry has been a high-profile issue in Portland, it's been the stuff of street protests, folks songs and YouTube campaigns in tourism-focused Yarmouth. While stopping short of the government subsidies that fueled the Cat, the community's Industrial Committee has been actively recruiting potential operators.