Beat: Travel

Ban On Cruise Ships In Canadian Waters

Extended Until 2022

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 07.02.2021, 01:24 Time

USPA NEWS - The Government of Canada announced today that a ban on cruise ships in Canadian waters will stay in place for one more year. The ban was originally put in place last year, was to expire at the end of February. The ban is now extended until Feb. 28, 2022, and applies to cruise ships carrying more than 100 people.

In a news release on February 4th, Minister of Transport, the Honourable Omar Alghabra said, “As Canadians continue to do their part to reduce the spread of COVID-19, our government continues to work hard to ensure Canada´s transportation system remains safe. Temporary prohibitions to cruise vessels and pleasure craft are essential to continue to protect the most vulnerable among our communities and avoid overwhelming our health care systems. This is the right and responsible thing to do.“ He went on to say, " It will allow public health authorities to focus on pressing issues, like the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and new variants of the virus."

The news release went on to say, "Essential passenger vessels, such as ferries and water taxis, should continue to follow local public health guidance and protocols, and follow mitigation measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and prevent future outbreaks. These could include: reducing the number of passengers, ensuring physical distancing, the wearing of masks, and enhanced cleaning and hygiene measures.

Cruise vessels in Canadian waters pose a risk to our health care systems. The Government of Canada will continue to evaluate the situation and make changes as necessary to ensure the health and safety of all Canadians. Should the COVID-19 pandemic sufficiently improve to allow the resumption of these activities, the Minister of Transport has the ability to rescind the Interim Orders."

It's not the news officials at the Port of Halifax and downtown businesses wanted to hear, but it was a possibility everyone had been preparing for. However, the reality is, a second canceled cruise ship season will have a significant impact on the local economy, affecting tour operators, attractions and bars, shops, and restaurants.

Lane Farguson a spokesperson for the Port of Halifax had this to say, "There is a lot of provisioning that takes place when those ships are in port, that's actually a much bigger part than people realize. The refueling that might take place, taking on of Nova Scotia wine, lobster, those kinds of things that the cruise lines can then serve to their guests when they're going to the next port of call in the Maritimes. When you factor in those two pieces in with the port-related costs, it totals up to $166 million each year in economic benefit, and with no cruise ships calling, that's the size of the hole it's going to leave in the local economy."

Farguson ended by saying, "When the COVID-19 situation eases and cruise ships are once again allowed to dock in Halifax Harbour, the port will be able to quickly gear up and welcome vessels. We're all looking forward to the day when we can get beyond this and get back to what we do, because Nova Scotia, the fundamentals of tourism here are still very strong."

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-18190/ban-on-cruise-ships-in-canadian-waters.html

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V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Brian Teepell

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619