

Atlantic Pilotage Authority launches new heavy-duty pilot boat

By TOM PETERS

HALIFAX – The Atlantic Pilotage Authority has launched a new pilot boat in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland designed to work in the region's harsh environment.

The state-of-the-art "fast boat" – designed by internationally known designer Alastair Cameron of Carmac Ltd., West Sussex, England – was specifically constructed to operate in heavy weather, under severe sea/swell conditions and icing, said **Capt. Tony McGuinness**, the Authority's Chief Executive Officer.

"The vessel has been built to provide fast and efficient running at pilot transfer speeds, combined with excellent sea keeping. Hull design is a double chine hull, equipped with twin propellers, skegs, and rudders," he said.

The \$2-million craft, built at Hike Head Metal products in Wheatley, Ont., is designed to travel at speeds up to 26 knots, and operate in winds up to 45 knots.

The increase in marine traffic in Placentia Bay, and the need for better pilot equipment, has been sparked by the Hibernia oil field. The movement of shuttle tankers, very large crude carriers, and large tugs – all associated with the Come-By-Chance oil refinery, and the Whiffen Head transshipment facility located on the shores of the bay – has put greater demands on marine pilots and the Authority's resources.

"The present aluminum pilot boats, though extremely hardy, needed to be replaced by a superior design



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vessel, capable of excellent manoeuvrability," said Capt. McGuinness.

The design for the vessel was determined after discussions with boat designer, the pilots, management of the Authority, and the approval of the Authority's customers.

The new vessel is powered by two Detroit Diesel/MTU 2000 Series V12 engines, producing 1,200 horsepower. The new series of high output, four-stroke cycle marine engines are reliable, have high output in all conditions, low maintenance, low cost of operation, and are easy to service.

The vessel has several other features: heated decks, heated handrails, continuous handrail system allowing the pilots(s) and deckhands to secure themselves with a safety harness, rapid ballast/deballast system, super-

structure built as separate module and fitted with flexible mounts and hypalon seal skirt to dampen vibration and noise, and a rescue platform located at the stern capable of retrieving a person overboard using both a rescue platform and electric winch combination. The vessel has the latest in navigational equipment, including a mini emergency rescue beacon worn on the arm by the pilot and launch crew.

The pilots handle over 700 assignments annually in Placentia Bay, and that number is expected to top 1,000 in the next few years.

The boat being replaced by the new vessel will be sent to Halifax to replace a small craft in that port. Plans are also in the works for a new state-of-the-art vessel for Halifax.