

Beat: Travel

Northumberland Ferries 2024 Season Update

More Mechanical Issues

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USPA NEWS - Northumberland Ferries Limited has been providing service for the past 80 years. In Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island it is not hard to find someone who is unable to share a fond memory of a trip across the Northumberland Strait on the MV Lord Selkirk, MV Prince Edward, MV Prince Nova, MV Confederation or up until recently the MV Holiday Island. These ships have not only served local residents, but also provided countless numbers of tourists and essential workers a vital link to PEI.

Over the last few years, Northumberland Ferries has faced significant challenges and setbacks including service interruptions due to mechanical issues, aging equipment and a major fire on the MV Holiday Island, which forced the ship to be permanently removed from service.

Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau announced that there would be construction of two new ferries to replace the aging MV Confederation and the MV Holiday Island, which was heavily damaged by a fire and scrapped in 2022. Trudeau, said that we can expect to see the new ferries in service as early as 2028. In the mean time, the Federal Government would be purchasing the MV Fanafjord, a Norwegian car ferry, to operate along with the MV Confederation until the construction of the new ferries is completed. At a press conference Prime Minister Trudeau said, "The federal government will purchase the MV Fanafjord to replace the MV Holiday Island, which caught fire in the summer of 2022 and was removed from service. He went on to say, "The government will build two new ferries for that route before 2028." These promises have yet to happen.

Disruptions in the ferry service between N.S. and P.E.I. is causing quite a stir. The MV Saaremaa 1 and MV Confederation, the ferries operating between the two provinces, are currently out of service due to mechanical issues. The MV Saaremaa 1 repairs are ongoing, with additional problems found with its four main engine, requiring more work.

Here is a summary of what we know about the latest Northumberland Ferries service interruptions. Mechanical issues have been found with the number four main engine on the MV Saaremaa 1. Northumberland Ferries says it will not be returning to service at NFL this season. Work continues on MV Confederation after it hit the dock. It is expected to be back in service in early December. Until then, the PEI to NS ferry service remains entirely shutdown.

These disruptions have significantly impacted travelers and the local tourism industries.

Northumberland Ferries Limited released the following update concerning the status of the MV Saaremaa 1 and the MV Confederation schedule interruptions. Information current as of October 19th, 2024.

MV Saaremaa 1:

"Société des traversiers du Québec (STQ) discovered additional mechanical issues with the number four main engine Friday morning. Due to these issues, MV Saaremaa 1 will not be returning to service at NFL this season. The issue is continuing to be addressed on the main engine repairs, and once the engine repairs are complete, MV Saaremaa 1 will be prepped for its return voyage to Quebec, likely at the end of October."

MV Confederation:

"The repair work on MV Confederation's bow visor continues to progress well. NFL has conducted a comprehensive internal risk assessment to identify and mitigate potential hazards associated with operating without the bow visor. As a result of that, NFL has engaged the Classification Society and Transport Canada Marine Safety and Security to determine if the vessel could be safely operated and how risks and hazards could be mitigated to ensure passenger safety. If the process is not successful, MV Confederation's return to service remains 9 December 2024.

NFL will continue to work closely with the shipyard in Pictou, Nova Scotia and believe that the schedule can be improved. NFL will be in a better position to forecast any schedule improvements by the end of this month."

"Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through these challenges. We will keep you informed of any further developments as they continue to evolve."

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