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## Cat to return; fewer trips Nova Scotia to subsidize high-speed ferry to Yarmouth at same fares as last year

BY BETH QUIMBY

KENNEBEC JOURNAL Morning Sentinel

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BY BETH QUIMBY

Portland Press Herald

The Cat high-speed ferry service from Portland to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, will return this year with a reduced schedule and the same fares as last year.

Bay Ferries Ltd., based in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, announced the new schedule and fares Thursday, the same day Nova Scotia provincial officials said they will inject as much as \$12 million into the financially troubled service.

The province agreed to cover operating losses in the coming season, which Bay Ferries president Mark MacDonald estimated would be substantially less than \$12 million. Nova Scotia provided Bay Ferries with \$5 million last year, on top of the \$1.25 million the province gave in 2006 and 2007.

Without the money, the Portland-to-Yarmouth service would have ended, said MacDonald. That run has been plagued by losses ever since the company picked up the service formerly provided by the Scotia Prince.

The ferry will operate on Fridays and Sundays in the spring and fall and on Thursdays through Sundays during the peak summer months.

Bay Ferries cut back its service to Portland late last summer due to low passenger traffic and high fuel costs. Last year, there was a 5 percent drop in the passenger count.

MacDonald said that even though high fuel costs have subsided, the recession probably will continue to depress travel between Maine and Nova Scotia.

"The traffic levels are more uncertain," MacDonald said.

Bay Ferries also operates the Cat between Bar Harbor and Yarmouth. About 100 people are employed in Yarmouth.

George Driscoll, vice president of marketing and sales for the company in Portland, said the ferry will not face competition from the new twice-daily air service between Portland International Jetport and the Yarmouth and Halifax airports. Nova Scotia is spending \$2 million to help create that service.

"They are really targeting the business passenger, and we applaud anything that promotes Yarmouth and Halifax," Driscoll said.

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