

# Workers clamour for ship jobs

## Resumés pour in as shipyards prepare to ink agreement with feds

BY CARLA WILSON, TIMESCOLONIST.COM JANUARY 9, 2012

Nearly 1,600 resumés, some from as far away as Russia and Dubai, have poured into Seaspan Marine and union offices from applicants hoping to work on \$8 billion worth of federal shipbuilding contracts in British Columbia.

The acute interest in the high-paying jobs comes as Vancouver and Victoria shipyards ready for what is billed as a "significant milestone announcement" on Thursday regarding the national shipbuilding procurement strategy.

Industry watchers expect the event will mark the signing of the umbrella agreement setting out how Seaspan and the federal government will deal with each other during construction of non-combat vessels at the company's Vancouver Shipyards in North Vancouver and Victoria Shipyards in Esquimalt. An agreement-in-principle was reached just prior to Christmas.

In October, Seaspan was granted the right to negotiate the umbrella agreement and subsequent contracts for seven or more individual vessels after a tough three-way cross-country fight. The work is expected to revitalize B.C.'s shipbuilding industry and provide an estimated 2,500 direct and 1,500 indirect jobs in an industry that has been struggling to survive for decades.

But jobs are not available just yet. In fact, the first steel is not expected to be cut until the first quarter of 2013. That's when the first new job openings are anticipated as the work rolls out over eight years — or longer if more vessels are built. Plans call for Seaspan to build 80 per cent of the vessels in Vancouver and then bring the ships to Victoria for final work and testing.

To date, Seaspan has received 1,579 resumés, Seaspan communications co-ordinator Kelly Francis said Monday.

Of those, about 40 per cent are from tradespersons and 60 per cent are from candidates interested in support services and similar roles. About 15 to 20 per cent of the resumés are from outside of Canada. A minimal number of resumés have come in from other provinces, Seaspan said.

Brian Carter, who founded the consulting company Brizo Maritime in California, started this month as president of Seaspan Shipyards.

George MacPherson, president of the Shipyard General Workers' Federation, said that resumés have been arriving in his Vancouver office seven days a week since the October announcement. He is forwarding them to Seaspan as well as individual union offices.

"They are all coming in early and the jobs are still a long way away, so we have got to tell them something. Otherwise we will just lose them," MacPherson said.

"We will sit down and start going through them to see what we've got and will be making contact with people in the future, trying to give them some sense of where we are and what the hiring is going to look like."

Most resumé's are from the Lower Mainland, but many are coming from the Interior of the province, MacPherson said. Some are from Alberta, and even as far away as Russia and Dubai.

"A lot of them are ticketed trades people, who may need a little bit of upgrade. We'll see as we go into it."

Within the applications are a "tremendous number" of young people eager to sign up as apprentices, MacPherson said. "I'm really excited about the young people coming in. That's the future, that's where we really need to concentrate."

Doug MacLaren, CEO of B.C.'s Resource Training Organization which is working with the shipbuilding industry, unions and educational institutions, said individual union offices are also receiving applications and said applicant numbers could be higher.

A pilot program offering fundamental training for those interested in entering the shipbuilding sector is expected to start in Greater Victoria this spring, he said. Anyone interested can email the RTO, which implements apprenticeship training for several sectors in B.C., at [info@rotbc.com](mailto:info@rotbc.com).

Planning is still underway to determine exactly how many workers will be needed and what training will be required. Marine fitter and shipbuilding programs are expected to start in September, he said.

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