

Seaspan, Ottawa sign historic shipbuilding deal

BY CARLA WILSON, TIMES COLONIST FEBRUARY 16, 2012

It's official.

Seaspan Marine Corp. and the federal government have signed an umbrella agreement that outlines construction of \$8 billion worth of non-combat vessels.

The agreement describes the responsibilities and expectations of Seaspan, owner of Vancouver Shipyards, Vancouver Drydock and Victoria Shipyards in Esquimalt, and the federal government during their partnership. It represents the first major agreement between the two under the national shipbuilding procurement strategy.

Next on the agenda is completing contract agreements for individual vessels. Offshore fisheries science and offshore oceanographic science vessels will be among the first to be built, said Public Works.

Canada's \$35-billion national shipbuilding procurement strategy is aimed at rebuilding the combat and non-combat fleets, as well as providing economic benefits to shipbuilders, suppliers and workers.

In October, Seaspan won the right to negotiate to build the \$8-billion non-combat component of the shipbuilding program, while Irving Shipbuilding's Halifax shipyards was picked to build combat vessels in a package worth an estimated \$25 billion. More contracts will be issued for smaller vessels.

So far, about 2,000 unsolicited resumés for trades workers have arrived at Seaspan and union offices. The company is hiring at head office and predicts the contracts will result in about 4,000 direct and indirect jobs after construction begins.

A new supplier self-registration portal was launched by Seaspan this week. The official supplier selection for the shipbuilding program has not taken place, but interested companies can register online at seaspan.com. Registration does not guarantee business with the company, Seaspan said in a statement.

As part of its agreement with the federal government, Seaspan has to report on all its business activities which relate directly or indirectly to the shipbuilding contracts and deliver benefits to local communities, suppliers and the Canadian economy.

Irving opened its supplier registry in January. It received more than 550 inquiries from potential suppliers after it was chosen for the combat package.

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