



**CETA**  
LUKEWARM  
RECEPTION  
FOR NEW  
INVESTOR  
RULES  
PAGE 4



**PIPELINES**  
TORIES PLAY  
POLITICS WITH  
NEW TRANSPORT  
REVIEW  
PAGE 5



**LABOUR**  
IMMIGRANTS  
FALLING BEHIND  
WITHOUT  
LANGUAGE SKILLS,  
SAY RESEARCHERS  
PAGE 9



**MEXICO**  
PUTTING  
IN PLACE A  
MEXICAN-  
CANADIAN  
'RENAISSANCE'  
PAGE 2

# EMBASSY

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## Wave of public servants becoming political staffers

■ 'It absolutely feeds into the perception that the civil service favours the Liberals.'

Kristen Shane

Several public servants have shed their neutrality to join the ranks of political staffers working for Liberal ministers.

These include a handful who've recently worked at the foreign ministry, as well as others from federal departments and organizations including the environment ministry, International Development Research Centre, Natural Resources Canada and Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

Some public servants who've made the switch are reprising political roles they held under previous Liberal governments.

To some Conservatives, the phenomenon feeds feelings expressed within their ranks that the public service is full of closeted Liberals.

But some of those who've made the move dismiss that view, noting that people of all political stripes work in the public service and they are able to separate their professional non-partisan life from their personal political views.

### Motivations to move

Why would someone give up their job security as a public servant to go to work sometimes long hours in the pressure cooker of a minister's office where their job is not guaranteed past the next election (or even next week)?

People who've made the switch talk about being drawn in by the policies of Justin Trudeau's government and the chance to serve the public in a meaningful way and work for change.

"For me personally, I'm...really, really glad at the chance to help out and to be part of something so much bigger...the politics, but also the environment side of things," said Caitlin Workman, press secretary to Environment Minister Catherine McKenna, who moved from the public service where she'd been about nine years, including five doing communications in the

Continued on Page 10

## First major cruise ship sails icy Northwest Passage this summer



The Crystal Cruises ship Crystal Serenity, seen here, will set sail from Alaska to New York via the Northwest Passage on Aug. 16, along the route seen in the inset graphic. Concerns about safety abound. *Crystal Cruises Photo and Embassy Illustration*

■ Still up for debate whether August voyage 'entirely safe,' warns Arctic scholar.

Marie-Danielle Smith

A sold-out cruise ship, the biggest ever to cross through the Northwest Passage, takes

off late this summer—and the Canadian government will be watching closely.

Amid concerns over navigating an icy, dangerous route, Canadian officials are working with Crystal Cruises to prevent potentially disastrous worst-case scenarios. While foreign vessels can sail in Canadian waters, Ottawa says it can order the ship, the Crystal Serenity, to find a different route if needed, or call in the defence department.

Transport and coast guard representatives confirmed to *Embassy* that they have been meeting since 2014 with the cruise line. The coast guard, which provides icebreaking services, "will continue to work in collaboration with Crystal Cruises' representatives to ensure a safe voyage," wrote Fisheries Minister Hunter Tootoo in an emailed statement.

Continued on Page 3

## Requests for border agency travel records soared after 2011

■ Feds continuing investigation into citizenship fraud, says IRCC.

Peter Mazereeuw

The Canada Border Services Agency has been swamped in recent years with public requests for a document used to prove resi-

dency in Canada, something former immigration minister Jason Kenney suspects is tied to the government's crackdown on citizenship fraud.

The CBSA processed 4,050 requests for Travel History Reports in 2014-2015, up about 50

per cent from the year prior and far more than the 159 requests made in 2010-2011, according to the agency's annual report to Parliament on its work related to the Access to Information Act.

Travel History Reports are records kept by CBSA of a person's entries into Canada, and

Continued on Page 5

# First major cruise ship sails icy Northwest Passage this summer



The Crystal Cruises ship Crystal Serenity sets sail for the Canadian Arctic Aug. 16. This is the ship's planned route. *Crystal Cruises Photo*

## Continued from Page 1

"Through our Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre in Iqaluit, the Canadian Coast Guard will monitor the voyage daily while it moves through the Northwest Passage," added Fisheries and Oceans spokesperson Carole Saindon.

"Should a marine emergency arise, the Canadian Coast Guard will work with the Department of National Defence regarding the co-ordination of maritime response efforts."

Canada will order the ship to find a different route if, "at any time, Transport Canada deems the voyage does not meet regulatory requirements or poses a safety concern," wrote Amber Wonko, a spokesperson for Transport Canada. If pollution occurs, the coast guard engages an "Environmental Response program," she added. What amount and type of pollution is necessary for the program to kick in is unclear.

Conservative fisheries and oceans critic Mark Strahl noted that weather and sea conditions can be unpredictable and dangerous in the Arctic. "The Liberal government must ensure that significant safety concerns are addressed before allowing this type of venture to proceed," he said.

Arctic scholar John Higginbotham also says it's still up for debate "whether it's entirely safe to take a ship with so many people on board through the Northwest Passage."

## More tourists experiencing the Arctic

The Crystal Serenity departs Anchorage, Alaska Aug. 16. It hits its first Canadian destination about 10 days later and arrives in Greenland by Sept. 7, finally disembarking in New York City Sept. 17.

Crystal's vice president of marine operations, Greg MacGarva, told *Embassy* that the company is also engaged with the US Coast Guard and local port agents in Greenland.

Foreign vessels can sail in Canadian waters as long as they have international certificates issued by the country where the vessel is registered, according to Transport Canada. The Crystal Serenity was built in France and has a Bahamian ship registry, according to Mr. MacGarva—something that isn't unusual for the world's major cruise lines.

The trip sold out within a month of going on the market, said Ms. Morgan, and there's now a waiting list of more than 400. Currently-listed prices start at \$21,855 and go up to more than \$120,000 per person (for a penthouse) based on double occupancy. Passengers need to show proof of an insurance plan that can cover up to \$50,000 per person for emergency evacuation.

One of the experts that Transport Canada has been consulting for this summer's voyage is Capt. David (Duke) Snider, a master mariner who retired from the coast guard as a regional director in 2012 and now works as a consultant for Martech Polar.

Capt. Snider said after he was approached by the department, he ended up working with the cruise line to develop its safety plans. He personally knows some of the ice navigators who are going to be working on the voyage, he said.

"The biggest concern, of course, is this is the first time a full-on cruise ship of this size will attempt such a voyage," he said.

The privately-owned yacht *The World* passed through the Northwest Passage in 2012. But its size pales in comparison to the Crystal Serenity, which carries up to 1,070 guests, according to company spokesperson Molly Morgan.

Ships of similar size, length and tonnage already operate in Arctic waters every summer. Routes through the Canadian Arctic archipelago are well-charted.

But those ships are not carrying a thousand tourists.

"Just about every possible option" for safety has been examined ahead of the journey, Capt. Snider said. If a disaster happened—"which is so highly unlikely"—there are backup plans to head to communities along the route.

Two Transport Canada-approved ice navigators will be on the main ship, and a support vessel that has been used for the British Antarctic Survey, the Ernest Shackleton, has been commissioned, Capt. Snider said.

That support ship has icebreaking capabilities and "a huge amount of experience as a ship in Antarctic and European Arctic waters." It will carry another ice navigator, helicopters and other equipment for emergency response.

According to Mr. MacGarva, the Serenity also has ice search lights and high-resolution radar. Mr. MacGarva couldn't confirm details about the support vessel because it is in negotiations with an escort vessel provider, he said.

"We have taken many extraordinary operational and equipment-related measures to ensure a safe voyage," he said.

"The typical conditions along the planned route during the Arctic summer are substantially free of ice. With these extremely low ice concentrations, keeping the ship well clear of ice is entirely feasible."

A "professional expedition team" will also be on board, consisting of 14 Arctic experts. They'll be offering lectures, seminars and workshops to passengers. "I see what Crystal has been doing as very proactive," Capt. Snider said. "This is about as well-put-together as it can be."

This kind of traffic is likely to increase in coming years, he said—the cruise line announced March 1 it's already planning another voyage through the passage for 2017—especially as climate change causes sea water to warm up and ice to melt.

At present, Canada has planned to build one new icebreaker, while the aging fleet that Capt. Snider used to sail on is still operating, with some of the ships 40 or 50 years old.

The coast guard is expanding its auxiliary presence in remote locations, according to recent government press releases, "but those are volunteers in the communities, with small boats," Capt. Snider argued. "Our government presence, our infrastructure presence is still extremely light."

## Impact on northern villages questioned

A review of the Transportation Act, chaired by David Emerson and tabled in Parliament last week, recommends increased funding for northern infrastructure and stricter regulations for vessel operators in the Canadian Arctic.

Arctic scholar Mr. Higginbotham says ship operators themselves are looking for better infrastructure and search and rescue capabilities, so as to improve safety overall and make cruising the Arctic more profitable.

"Until there's more airports, until there's better search and rescue, until there's safer charting, it's still a long way off in the Canadian Arctic," Mr. Higginbotham said.

Several communities in the Canadian north are listed on the itinerary, including Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut and Pond Inlet, Nunavut, on Baffin Island.

Capt. Snider recalls visiting a community in the far north—some of them are villages of only 500 people—with a Canadian icebreaker, years ago. People in the village asked if he had brought any produce on the icebreaker. Tourists from a small cruise ship had come into the community and bought them out.

"That's the kind of thing I've always kept in the back of my head. When we go into these communities, we have to be aware of their footprint and their survival," he said.

To Capt. Snider's knowledge, the cruise line is working with communities on "clearly restricting impact." They won't dump 1,000 tourists into a village of 500 people all at once, he said. Crystal's website states it will only conduct visits "under the approval of the local communities."

Andrea Charron, a postdoctoral fellow at Carleton University, said she's nervous about the tourism industry's characterization of the north as "quaint," instead of a dangerous place where communities are quite sensitive.

She said the idea of local participation is good, but the concept of "clearing out a store until the next year when they can get resupplied" is a real concern—and some tourists treat villages like "museum pieces," forgetting they are among real people's homes.

"If this is a resounding success, it may encourage other cruise ships to give it a go, and they may not have the same sort of resources or planning that Crystal has. And that's concerning," Ms. Charron said.

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