



photo courtesy VFPA

## By merging Metro Vancouver's three port authorities into one unified entity, the new Vancouver Fraser Port Authority creates strategic opportunities for the future.

BY SIMON HILL

**B**C mariners have long taken for granted the Lower Mainland's three separate port authorities, and during the region's development this structure made sense. But times change, and successful organizations must adapt. Modern communications technologies are making physical distances less relevant, and the Lower Mainland is moving increasingly towards the concept of "Metro Vancouver" with the ports as our Pacific Gateway. In June 2006, the Federal Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities invited the Fraser River Port Authority, the North Fraser Port Authority and the Vancouver Port Authority to examine port amalgamation.

The three port authorities commissioned a report on the potential benefits of an integrated port authority, and the report recommended that the three port authorities amalgamate. On June 16 2007, Transport Canada issued the "Certificate of Intent to Amalgamate Port Authorities." On December 21, 2007, the federal government Gazetted the "Certificate of Amalgamation," officially combining the three port authorities into the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (VFPA) effective January 1, 2008.

**Mariner Life** sat down with Tom Winkler, Chief Strategic Development Officer at the VFPA to discuss how the port benefits from the amalgamation, and how the changes will affect mariners and the marine community as whole.

### Offices and Personnel

During any merger, there will inevitably be some redundant positions and facilities, but Winkler points out that in merging the port, most key personnel from the individual ports stayed on. "Basically, everyone from all three legacy organizations' executive are now on the new executive," he explains. "We had a couple of retirements at the Fraser River, and one from the North Fraser, and we had one executive leave during the course of the amalgamation who was never replaced, because we knew that under the amalgamation we'd have a larger executive."

In terms of facilities, perhaps the biggest change is that the original North Fraser Port Authority offices in Richmond will be closed effective June 15. "We're going to be maintaining the offices in New Westminster and Vancouver, so we'll have two offices," says Winkler. The New Westminster office will act as a River Service Centre and will include: Harbourmaster (marine operations); Security (land operations); Real Estate; and Environmental Services. Personnel will be based mostly out of the harbourmaster's office, with full functional support provided from the Canada Place office in Vancouver, where back-room facilities such as legal, financial and accounting will be centralized. "Our intent is to provide a service centre in both locations that can address the customer and stakeholder issues," Winkler explains.

Because the North Fraser Port Authority was a relatively small operation, it was the most affected by the personnel changes: Val Jones, well-known as the North Fraser's VP of Operations, was one of those who

retired as part of the amalgamation. "When you have a really small organization you get the people who are the most knowledgeable answering all the questions," Winkler points out, "so their scope of responsibilities is vast." Val Jones was certainly one of those people, whereas in the new, larger organization the roles are more specialized, and inquiries will need to be channeled to the person with the relevant responsibility. "We have a standard number and it can be referred to from reception from either office," says Winkler, "so it will be transparent to a caller." (See sidebar for a list of key contacts.)

### Strategic Opportunities

Clearly, a bigger port authority wields greater political and financial clout than several small authorities, and the VFPA is already capitalizing on this to build towards a sustainable future. "We're able to develop an integrated approach to land use," says Winkler. "We're acquiring Canfor's lands in the New West/Coquitlam area, and we're looking at other industrial land opportunities. Because industrial land is disappearing, and we've got to put some stretches in place not only for the immediate future but for the longer-term future of the port." The port intends to speak with stakeholders on the river about river management, dredging and related initiatives, and will be holding forums to gauge public sentiment regarding dredging policies.

The VFPA is also floating ideas for future transportation, such as container barging on the river to reduce truck traffic on the Trans Canada. "It's something that we're investigating," agrees Winkler, "We've got to look at every opportunity for reducing the environmental footprint of the business we're in."

If container barging does get going on the river, the existing Fraser Surrey Docks might be an ideal site for a central trans-shipment hub, but for now, Winkler emphasizes, there are no plans to change or repurpose any of the VFPA's existing facilities. "Fraser-Surrey terminal provides a really strategic opportunity for smaller container lines," he explains. "They've proven in the past that they can handle up to 400,000-450,000 TEUs very efficiently." Winkler admits that if the number of smaller lines using the facility falls off, there might arise some opportunities to consolidate break bulk at various terminals, but he makes it clear that any such changes are well in the future and would need thoroughly evaluating.

### Forward Looking

The VFPA was created to operate the Lower Mainland's ports on behalf of the Government of Canada, and as such its ultimate mandate is to serve Canadians. "Our mandate is the efficient and effective movement of cargo and passengers through the port for the best interests of Canadians," explains Winkler. "And along with that we have a sustainable growth objective." Generally speaking, a growing country will have growing ports, and the VFPA is responsible for ensuring that growth takes place sustain-

### About the VFPA

The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (VFPA) operates and develops the assets of the combined Fraser River Port Authority, North Fraser Port Authority and Vancouver Port Authority. The VFPA is a non-shareholder, for-profit corporation, established by the Government of Canada in January 2008 pursuant to the *Canada Marine Act*, and accountable to the federal Minister of Transport. The VFPA is governed by an eleven-member board of directors from the three former port authorities, representing government and industry.

The seven members nominated by the port user group and continuing in their director capacity include Doug Butterworth, Andrew Johnston, Ken Matchett, Jack Matthews, Peter Podovnikoff (Vice Chair), Bob Wilds and John Willcox. Trevor Klassen continues as the western provinces appointee, Kazuko Komatsu as the federal appointee, Sarah Morgan-Silvester (Chair) as the provincial appointee and Helen Sparkes as the municipal appointee. The VFPA Board of Directors unanimously appointed Capt. Gordon Houston as President and CEO.

### Key Port Contacts

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Administration Controller	Kari Euverman Angela Louie
Corporate Communications and Public Affairs	Anne McMullin
Engineering and Maintenance	Tim Glasheen
Environmental Programs	Darrell Desjardin
Finance	Larry Sawrenko
Government Relations, First Nations & Federal Government Relations, Provincial and Municipal Harbour Master	Duncan Wilson
Human Resources	Mark Erdman
Information Services	Yoss Leclerc
Internal Audit	Christine Dioszeghy
Land Operations	Fiona Smith
Legal Services and Corporate Secretary	Elaine Wong
Planning and Development	Curtis Cloutier
Project Management	Dean Readman
Property Taxation	Patrick McLaughlin
Real Estate	Gilles Assier
Security	Rob Fitzgerald
Supply Chain	Jim Crandles
Trade Development	Melanie Costley
	Dennis Bickel
	Scott Galloway

ably and doesn't come at a social or environmental cost. "We're looking at sustainable growth," Winkler says, "and we've got to ramp that up in terms of outreach to the communities and keep on track with our environmental initiatives." The port's stakeholders include not only port customers, but all levels of government, first nations, all the various communities and municipalities surrounding the ports, and the port employees. Keeping them all happy won't be an easy task, but it's one the newly-formed port authority is keen to tackle. "We're really excited about what's happened and about the possibilities," concludes Winkler, "and we're just gung-ho to go forward."

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