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ACL committed to Halifax; will double volume through the port

Atlantic Container Line (ACL) will maintain its twice-weekly call at the Canadian port of Halifax using its new G4 ro-ro/container ships. The company said it would continue to serve the North American and European markets at the Fairview Cove Container Terminal operated by Ceres Halifax.

“We looked long and hard at various schedule alternatives for our new ships,” said Andrew Abbott, president and CEO of ACL. “Some excluded Halifax but we just could not ignore the close cooperation and support of the HPA [Halifax Port Authority] and Ceres that removed every obstacle to a long-term agreement. The quality improvements to the CN Rail service and the consistent cooperation of our ILA colleagues were also influential factors in our decision.”

Back in 2010, Canadian National (CN) signed an agreement with HPA that set performance metrics aimed at increasing efficiency. Since then it has seen a drop in dwell times, and improved rail-car availability. HPA is also now offering an enhanced web-tracking tool for importers and exporters moving containers through the port.

Abbott went on to say that ACL volume via Halifax would eventually double as its new ships come into service.

“ACL looks forward to a long future in Halifax with our large, new, fuel efficient and environmentally friendly G4 vessels,” said Abbott. “The port of Halifax will now remain our largest port in North America, and our gateway for Canada and the US Midwest.”

ACL has been calling at the port since 1970. In January, ACL’s newest vessel, Atlantic Star, called at the port. It is the first of five new G4 ACL con-ro vessels. The vessels are being built at Hudong-Zhonghua Shipbuilding in China. Each has a container capacity of 3,800 TEU, compared with 1,850 TEU for ACL’s five current G3 ships. In addition they will have 764 TEUs of ro-ro space against 525 TEUs now, and space in the car decks for around 1,300 vehicles.

ACL offers five transatlantic sailings each week and also markets the Grimaldi Lines direct ro-ro/container service between the US and West Africa. The company also offers service for non-containerised cargo from North America to the Mediterranean, Middle East, South Africa, Australia and the Far East.