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2008 proves a record year for cruises: Port

Devin Stevens for Metro Halifax

03 October 2008 05:18

Bars and restaurants were packed yesterday as a record 9,700 people on four different cruise ships docked in Halifax Harbour. Things were so busy at O'Carroll's Irish Pub the manager couldn't stop to talk.

"I would love to but we're all backed up," said manager Mark Boyd. "You can call back later. Actually, wait. I have pub crawls all afternoon because of the cruise ships."

The Halifax Port Authority says cruises inject \$25 million into the city's economy every year. The authority was celebrating the ships' arrival by giving each captain a Democracy 250 flag. Passengers got cake and souvenirs.

"2008 has certainly been a record year for cruise at the Port of Halifax," Catherine McGrail, the authority's Manager of Cruise Development, said in a news release.

"The Port and its partners have been instrumental in developing our reputation as the premier port of call in Atlantic Canada."

Almost 130 ships and 220,000 passengers are expected in the 2008 season.

"It's proven that bringing cruise people in, it's like a huge interactive brochure," said Danny Morton, chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia.

"There's no better way to introduce somebody to the area, and there's a large number that decide to come back."

Morton said many tourists have already cruised to the Caribbean and Alaska. As a result, the Atlantic region is just being discovered.



ryan taplin/metro halifax

A record 9,700 cruise passengers were in Halifax yesterday as four ships docked in Halifax Harbour.

He said some don't consider cruises as a tourism product because passengers don't stay in hotels.
"But our bars are happy, our gift shops are happy."