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New era begins for Victoria's famous double deckers

VICTORIA, B.C. – A new generation of British double-decker buses is helping Wilson's Transportation and Gray Line Sightseeing Victoria usher in a new era for the region's tourism industry.

This week marks the end of active service for eight vintage double deckers that have served visitors for decades as part of Sightseeing Victoria's Hop-On Hop-Off CitySights Tour.

The vehicles, including a Leyland Routemaster that dates back to 1959, are being replaced by a fleet of fuel-efficient Alexander Dennis Enviro 400 buses. The new double-deckers are quieter and much more comfortable for passengers.

"It is time to embrace a new generation and do our part as good corporate citizens in our hometown," says John Wilson, President and CEO of the Wilson's Group of companies.

Starting Saturday, Oct. 7, all future tours will be on the new vehicles. However, the transition doesn't mean the much-loved buses will disappear from public view forever.

"We loved those old buses and know that many people who rode them did as well. They have a fascinating charm from playing an important role in transportation history, which is why we're happy to preserve at least some of them for ceremonial functions," Wilson says, adding the old buses could be used in parades or parked as displays during special events. Other buses will be made available to interested collectors from around the world.

"We know many visitors love the experience of touring the city in a double decker, and we are happy that can now be done in vehicles that meet the standards that today's travellers expect," says Paul Nursey, President and CEO of Tourism Victoria. "Wilson's is making a new investment of several millions of dollars in cleaner transportation. This is a tremendous vote of confidence in the financial and environmental sustainability of our destination."

The Enviro 400 buses meet the highest standard for allowable emissions, and switching to them reflects a commitment by Wilson's Transportation to do its part to reduce greenhouse gases and help the City of Victoria realize its Sustainability Vision.

"It's great to see a local business like Wilson's taking a leadership role, moving us to a clean energy future," said Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps. "The changes that Wilson's is making are in line with the City's Climate Leadership Plan of 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050."

Operated by Wilson's Transportation, Gray Line Sightseeing Victoria's Hop-On Hop-Off buses provide a convenient and entertaining way to tour the region. Buses stop at popular attractions and landmarks including the world-famous Fairmont Empress Hotel, Craigdarroch Castle and Oak Bay village.

About Wilson's Transportation: The Wilson's Group is Vancouver Island's largest transportation company and has been serving the region since 1962. Reaching BC, Alberta and the Pacific Northwest, services include a charter bus company, scheduled services YYJ Airport Shuttle and the crosswater connection between Victoria and Vancouver, BC Ferries Connector, as well as sightseeing products including Sightseeing Victoria's Gray Line Hop-On Hop-Off and City Sightseeing Tours.

About Tourism Victoria: Greater Victoria's official, not-for-profit Destination Marketing Organization works in partnership with more than 950 businesses and municipalities in Greater Victoria.

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