



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

April 14, 2015

Prime Minister Stephen Harper
House of Commons, K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: pressing need to restore coast guard services in BC

The toxic bunker fuel spill in the Vancouver Harbour last week provided a vivid and terrible example of why we need immediate action to restore coast guard services in British Columbia.

We are calling on your government to take three immediate steps:

1. Re-open the Kitsilano Coast Guard Station,
2. Re-open the recently-closed Ucluelet Marine Communication and Traffic Service Centre, and
3. Halt plans to close the Vancouver and Comox MCTS centres.

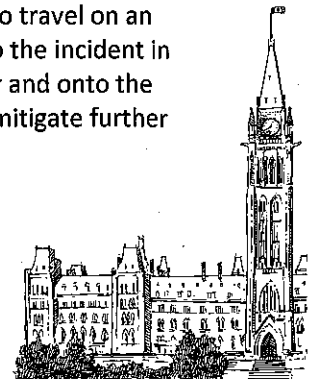
As you are aware, the federal government is responsible for keeping Canada's coasts safe, secure, and free of environmental contamination. In 2010, the Auditor General warned that Canada's spill response capacity is inadequate and that we are not prepared to deal with even a moderately sized spill.

However, over the last four years, your government has shut down the Kitsilano Coast Guard base, closed BC's oil spill environmental response center, and is in the process of shutting three of the five Marine Communication and Traffic Centers, all while marine traffic is increasing.

When cutting resources to the organizations tasked with responding to environmental incidents on the BC coast, experts warned about the impact these cuts would have. Now these warnings have become reality. The closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station had a direct impact on the Coast Guard's ability to stage an urgent response to last week's spill.

Prior to its closure, the Kitsilano Coast Guard station was one of the most active in the country, servicing Canada's largest and busiest port. The reckless decision to close down the Kitsilano Coast Guard station was an abdication of the federal government's responsibility to protect Canada's coastal waters and is already undermining the Coast Guard's ability to respond to spills and maritime emergencies on the British Columbia coast.

According to former Kitsilano Coast Guard base commander Fred Moxey, a single rubber boat was initially deployed on Wednesday night as the Richmond Coast Guard Station's hovercraft is not able to travel on an oil slick. But the Kitsilano base, if it were still operational, would have been able to respond to the incident in six minutes and with the proper equipment to contain a spill from spreading across the water and onto the shoreline. Instead, there was a six-hour delay in placing booms around the leaking tanker to mitigate further disbursement and contamination.





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From our perspective this delay was unacceptable, unnecessarily risky for the environmental protection of our coastal waters, and is an immediate consequence of your government's refusal to engage with the many stakeholders that warned about the importance of the Kitsilano base prior to its closure on February 19th, 2013.

This spill also could have been much worse. Imagine if it had been an oil tanker, or an issue at the refinery in the Burrard Inlet; the situation would be devastating. A crude oil spill in the Lower Mainland would be a catastrophic. It would not only affect the coast, but the communities and economies that depend on these environments.

We are also deeply concerned that the closure of Marine Communications and Traffic Centres put other areas of the BC Coast at risk.

We urge you to take action now to protect our coast. Before British Columbians are forced to respond to another spill on our coast, please re-open the Kitsilano Coast Guard station, restore operations at BC's Marine Communication and Traffic Service centers, and work with the Province and municipalities to quickly put in place a modernized spill response plan for British Columbia.

Sincerely,

Alex Atamanenko, MP
BC Southern Interior

Jean Crowder, MP
Nanaimo-Cowichan

Nathan Cullen, MP
Skeena-Bulkley Valley

Don Davies, MP
Vancouver-Kingsway

Libby Davies, MP
Vancouver East

Fin Donnelly, MP
New Westminster-Coquitlam
& Port Moody

Randall Garrison, MP
Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca

Peter Julian, MP
Burnaby-New Westminster

Murray Rankin, MP
Victoria

Jasbir Sandhu, MP
Surrey North

Jinny Sims, MP
Newton-North Delta

Kennedy Stewart, MP
Burnaby Douglas

