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March 25, 2013

File No.: 5450-30; 0410-20

Via Email: [mintc@tc.gc.ca](mailto:mintc@tc.gc.ca)

The Honourable Denis Lebel  
Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities  
Tower C - 330 Sparks St.  
Ottawa Ontario K1A 0N5

Dear Minister Lebel:

**Re: Derelict and abandoned vessels**

As Chair of the Islands Trust Council, I'm writing to you in response to the recently released Transport Canada report on the study of the extent of abandoned and derelict vessels in Canada.

The Islands Trust has been concerned with derelict and abandoned vessels for decades and has been asking since 2010 for the Province of British Columbia and the federal government to develop a coordinated approach to the timely removal of all types of derelict and abandoned vessels, barges and docks. Although we're grateful for the leadership shown by Transport Canada staff in some specific derelict vessel removals last year, no permanent solutions have been adopted. Federal and provincial departments continue to say jurisdiction for the issue is unclear, as was evidenced in recent media coverage on derelict vessels in Howe Sound.

Derelict and abandoned vessels, barges and docks pose environmental contamination and safety risks. They also create visual pollution in our communities that negatively impacts tourism and commercial activities. As confirmed in the recently released report, the age of vessels in Canadian waters is increasing and so the incidence of abandoned and derelict vessels is expected to increase and become unmanageable.

We appreciate that Transport Canada undertook the study and released the report. However, we are concerned the report significantly underestimates the number of derelict and abandoned vessels in BC. The report cites only 42 derelict and abandoned vessels on the whole BC coast, but that can't be right, given the 60 problem vessels our staff reported to your survey after a very brief poll in just the Islands Trust Area. Also, given the ten-month wait for the report, we had hoped it would contain more substantive analysis of the root causes of the problem, possible preventative measures, and existing barriers to action.

We are pleased Transport Canada and other federal departments are forming an inter-jurisdictional working group with interested provincial agencies. There is already an inter-jurisdictional working group for the BC coast (although it has been dormant while waiting for this federal inventory); we've been grateful for the participation of Transport Canada staff.

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Preserving **Island** communities, culture and environment

Bowen Denman Hornby Gabriola Galiano Gambier Lasqueti Mayne North Pender Salt Spring Saturna South Pender Thetis

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We support the goals of the new working group as outlined in the recommendations section of the report and suggest that the working group start by undertaking more rigorous data collection and detailed mapping. We also encourage you to include local government representatives on the working group, and ask that you consider inviting Islands Trust staff to participate.

We look forward to the working group concluding its work expeditiously, in consideration of previous delays in addressing this issue. The number of abandoned vessels in the Islands Trust Area overdue for removal is increasing every month. Given the need for immediate action, we request that Transport Canada provide interim funding for vessel removals while awaiting the advice of the working group.

We look forward to your response to this letter and to increased attention from Transport Canada to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Sheila Malcolmson  
Chair, Islands Trust Council

cc: Islands Trust Executive Committee  
Minister of the Environment (BC & Canada)  
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans  
BC Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations  
Trust Area MPs  
AVICC members  
Bowen Island Municipality  
Islands Trust website