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January 19, 2021

File No.: 5020-30 Anchorages

Via Email: omar.alghabra@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Omar Alghabra
Minister of Transport
330 Sparks Street
Ottawa ON, K1A 0N5

Dear Minister Alghabra:

Re: Call for Immediate Action to Address Freighter Anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands

On behalf of the elected Islands Trust Council I am pleased to convey our congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Transport. We look forward to working with you. I am writing at the request of the Islands Trust Council to express our dismay over the lack of federal government action to address the serious issue of freighter anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands and to request your leadership on the issue. Despite more than ten years of consistent advocacy from the Islands Trust, Members of Parliament, First Nations governments and coastal communities, the federal government has yet to play a leadership role in resolving this issue. We were heartened with the Ocean Protection Plan's inclusion of an active Anchorage Initiative component but have failed to see any progress. As marine shipping continues to grow and supply chain inefficiencies continue to worsen, our communities and the marine environment of the Salish Sea are suffering the costs of prolonged federal inaction. Amidst a climate emergency, this inaction is simply unacceptable.

The Islands Trust Area, between the British Columbia mainland and Vancouver Island is one of the most productive marine ecosystems in the world and includes the highest density of species at risk in Canada. The significance and sensitivity of the region, and the need for protective measures, were internationally recognized in 1973. Nonetheless, over the past ten years, the number of coal, grain and break bulk cargo ships anchoring in the Southern Gulf Islands has increased dramatically as ships wait to access the Port of Vancouver. Coastal communities are deeply concerned over the increasing number of vessels, the growing size of these vessels and the longer periods of time that vessels are spending at anchor due to long-standing supply chain issues. Industry and government predict anchorage use will continue to increase unless the federal government and the Port of Vancouver implement long-term solutions.

The Islands Trust Council takes seriously its statutory mandate from the Province of British Columbia to work in cooperation with others to preserve and protect this sensitive and biodiverse region, but we cannot do so without the support of our federal and provincial partners. We are calling for federal accountability and urgent, meaningful federal leadership to resolve this issue.

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Islands Trust Council calls upon the federal government to:

- 1) take all measures possible to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, the use of the 33 commercial freighter anchorage sites throughout the Southern Gulf Islands, collectively referred to by Transport Canada as the 'South Coast of British Columbia'**
- 2) provide a report to Islands Trust Council on the progress made under the Oceans Protection Plan's Anchorages Initiative and planned next steps**
- 3) provide a report to Islands Trust Council in response to our April 24, 2020, request for a Transportation Safety Board investigation into the March 30, 2020, freighter collision in Plumper Sound, British Columbia**
- 4) direct Transport Canada officials to meet with leadership in the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, BC Chamber of Shipping, and other appropriate industry representatives, to identify immediate measures to reduce the number of bulk cargo ships currently being directed to anchor in the Southern Gulf Islands while long-term solutions are explored**

In my last [letter](#) to the Minister of Transport, dated April 24, 2020, in the wake of a nearly disastrous collision between anchored freighters in Plumper Sound, B.C., Islands Trust Council called upon the federal government to conduct a comprehensive Transportation Safety Board investigation into the March 30th collision. We have yet to receive any response to that letter.

These anchorage sites are located within the traditional and treaty territories of local First Nations who have utilized the waters and resources in the Southern Gulf Islands since time immemorial. The anchorage sites were designated without consultation with local First Nations or local communities. We are concerned about the impacts these anchorages incur on First Nations and small island communities, as well as local species and ecosystems at risk. These impacts include significant noise, light, and air pollution; disturbance of local marine ecosystems and food webs; threats to local economies and livelihoods; and the ever-looming risk of catastrophic fuel spills in this environmentally sensitive region. Furthermore, we are concerned that the acoustic disturbance from freighters transiting through the foraging areas of the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale is a significant factor contributing to that species' extinction.

Since 2008, Islands Trust has been expressing its serious concerns regarding the inappropriate use of the Southern Gulf Islands for industrial activities such as commercial freighter anchorages and the transfer of gypsum and other materials utilizing barges for export. In September 2016, the Union of BC Municipalities endorsed an Islands Trust resolution calling on Transport Canada to assess the cumulative risks and impacts associated with projected vessel traffic increases in the Salish Sea and develop an innovative twenty-year mitigation plan. To date, the Oceans Protection Plan and the Interim Protocol for the Use of Southern B.C. Anchorages have not shown any promise of protecting the Salish Sea from the cumulative harm incurred by freighter anchorages. With every day that the government fails to act, the cumulative impacts on this sensitive marine environment continue to worsen, undermining the health and well-being of coastal communities and all Canadians.

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The Islands Trust Council remains committed to working collaboratively and constructively with federal agencies and industry associations to resolve this important issue without further delay. We look forward to hearing from you regarding the requests and concerns we have outlined in this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Luckham

Chair, Islands Trust Council

pluckham@islandstrust.bc.ca

cc: Terry Beech, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard
Islands Trust Area MPs
BC Minister of Environment and Climate Change
BC Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure
Gabriolans Against Freighter Anchorages
Anchorages Concern Thetis
Cowichan Bay Ship Watch Society
Plumper Sound Protection Association
Stuart Channel Anchorages Protection
Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia
Shipping Federation of Canada
Nanaimo Port Authority
Pacific Pilotage Authority
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority
Cowichan Valley Regional District Board
Town of Ladysmith Mayor and Council
BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin) First Nation
Cowichan Tribes
Halalt First Nation
Homalco First Nation
Klahoose First Nation
K'ómoks First Nation
Lake Cowichan First Nation
Lekwungen (Songhees) Nation
Lyackson First Nation
MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Nation
Penelakut Tribe
Qualicum First Nation
Scia'new (Beecher Bay) First Nation
SEMYOME (Semiahmoo) First Nation
shíshálh First Nation
Snuneymuxw First Nation
Sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation
Snaw-naw-as (Nanoose) First Nation
S̓TÁUTW (Tsawout) First Nation
Stz'uminus First Nation
SXIMEŁEŁ (Esquimalt) Nation
Tla'amin (Sliammon) Nation
Tsawwassen First Nation
Tseil-Waututh Nation
T'Sou-ke Nation
Wei Wai Kum (Campbell River) First Nation
We Wai Kai (Cape Mudge) First Nation
W̓JOŁEŁP (Tsartlip) First Nation
W̓SIKEM (Tseycum) First Nation
x̓m̓əθk̓əy̓əm Musqueam
First Nations Leadership Council
Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group
Laich-kwil-tach Treaty Society
Nanwakolas Council
Naut'sa mawt Tribal
Te'mexw Treaty Association
Bowen Island Municipal Council
Islands Trust Council
Islands Trust website