



200 - 1627 Fort St., Victoria, BC V8R 1H8
Telephone **(250) 405-5151** Fax (250) 405-5155
Toll Free via Enquiry BC in Vancouver 660-2421. Elsewhere in BC
1.800.663.7867
Email information@islandstrust.bc.ca
Web www.islandstrust.bc.ca

April 24, 2020

File Number: 5020-30 Anchorages

Via Email: marc.garneau@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Marc Garneau
Minister of Transport
330 Sparks Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N5

Dear Minister Garneau:

Re: Call for TSB Investigation into March 30th Freighter Collision in Plumper Sound

As Chair of the Islands Trust Council, I wish to express my gratitude for the efforts that you and your federal government colleagues have undertaken to help quell the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic here in Canada. While I am certain that the pandemic is everyone's top priority at the moment, I am writing to bring your attention to a recent incident that could have led to a catastrophic fuel spill here in the Islands Trust Area.

In the early morning hours of March 30, 2020, high winds caused a 200-metre freighter that was anchored in Plumper Sound, British Columbia, to drag its anchor across the ocean floor and collide with another anchored freighter. We understand that the collision caused damage, including a hole in one of the vessels' hulls. To make matters worse, the anchor chains of the two vessels became dangerously entangled, severely impairing their ability to maneuver in the narrow confines of Plumper Sound. Tugboats were fortunately able to rescue the two vessels. Canada narrowly avoided a catastrophic fuel spill at a time when the country was already struggling to deal with the pandemic. But it was, yet again, too close a call. Over the last decade, there have been some twenty cases of vessels drifting out of their assigned anchorage locations in the Southern Gulf Islands. It is time for stronger federal action to ensure that this does not happen again.

Islands Trust Council calls upon the federal government to conduct a comprehensive Transportation Safety Board investigation into the March 30th freighter vessel collision in Plumper Sound, British Columbia.

I'm sure you will agree that we all need to better understand exactly what happened, whether the established protocols were followed, and how we can best ensure that this alarming trend does not continue.

In addition, **Islands Trust Council reiterates its longstanding request that the federal government 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'**. The 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 sites were designated without consultation with local First Nations or local communities. We are concerned and vitally aware of 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 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.

.../2

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.

The Islands Trust Area 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 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. To date, the Oceans Protection Plan and the Interim Protocol for the Use of Southern B.C. Anchorages have not been successful at resolving the problems at hand.

Islands Trust remains committed to working collaboratively and constructively with Transport Canada and industry to resolve this important issue without further delay. The protection of this sensitive region is of critical importance to Canada's national interests. I therefore ask for your attention to this issue, starting with a Transportation Safety Board investigation into the March 30th freighter vessel collision in Plumper Sound.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Luckham
Chair, Islands Trust Council
pluckham@islandstrust.bc.ca

cc: Islands Trust Area MPs
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
Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation
Snaw-naw-as (Nanoose) First Nation
S'ÁUTW (Tsayout) 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
WJOLEŁP (Tsartlip) First Nation
WSIKEM (Tseycum) First Nation
x^wməθk^wəyəm Musqueam

The Honourable Marc Garneau

April 24, 2020

Page 3

Cc: First Nations Leadership Council
Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group
Laich-kwil-tach Treaty Society
Nanwakolas Council
Naut'sa mawt Tribal Council
Te'mexw Treaty Association
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
Bowen Island Municipal Council
Islands Trust Council
Islands Trust website