

Minister of Transport



Ministre des Transports

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0N5

DEC 14 2017

Mr. Peter Luckham
President
Islands Trust Council
200-1627 Fort Street
Victoria BC V8R 1H8

Dear Mr. Luckham:

Thank you for your correspondence of November 6, 2017, regarding Bill C-64 and the Abandoned Boats Program, two key elements of the government's broader strategy on abandoned and wrecked vessels announced as part of the Oceans Protection Plan in November 2016.

Transport Canada has heard the concerns raised by coastal and local communities across Canada about wrecked, abandoned, and hazardous vessels, including small pleasure craft. This is why the strategy on abandoned and wrecked vessels is comprehensive and focussed on both prevention and removal.

As you pointed out, the government recently introduced the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act (Bill C-64), a key preventative element of our national strategy. The proposed legislation will prohibit vessel abandonment and other acts of irresponsible vessel management; strengthen owner responsibility and liability for their vessels and wrecks, including costs for clean-up and removal; and empower the Government of Canada to take proactive action on problem vessels before they become more costly to Canadians.

Bill C-64 would also give the Nairobi International Convention on the Removal of Wrecks, 2007 force of law in Canada by extending it to all Canadian waters and applying it to wrecked vessels of all sizes. This includes creating new obligations for owners to report, locate, mark, and, if necessary, remove wrecks resulting from maritime casualties, should the wrecks be considered hazardous.

Canada

Owners of vessels that are 300 gross tons or more would also be required to maintain insurance or some other type of financial security to cover the costs of wreck removal, should the wreck pose a hazard.

As critical as the legislation is, it is but one part of the national strategy announced last year. In the short term, we recognize the need to deal with the legacy problem vessels currently affecting coastal communities. As you noted, that is why in 2017 the government launched two programs to support local efforts to remove and dispose of smaller high-priority vessels. This includes the five-year \$6.85-million Abandoned Boats Program under Transport Canada and the five-year \$1.325-million Small Craft Harbours Abandoned and Wrecked Vessels Removal Program under Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The Abandoned Boats Program also includes funding to support education and awareness activities and research into recycling options. For example, fibreglass is a common hull component in pleasure craft and can be recycled.

The national strategy also comprises additional and essential longer-term components. For example, the effectiveness of the legislation depends on the ability to identify owners. This can be a challenge, particularly with older vessels and pleasure craft. The government is already collaborating with the provinces and territories to identify ways in which we can enhance the pleasure craft licensing system and is exploring options for addressing gaps in the commercial vessel registration systems.

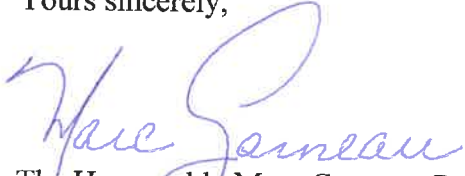
In addition, a national inventory of problem vessels is being developed and will be maintained by the Canadian Coast Guard. I would note that the inventory will be publicly accessible. This will include a risk-based methodology to help prioritize future actions on problem vessels in the inventory.

Finally, the national strategy includes work to establish vessel-owner financed funds aligned with the polluter-pay principle to address both large and small abandoned vessels and wrecks over the longer term. This will ensure that costs associated with these problem vessels are not covered by taxpayers and local communities.

Starting this fall, engagement sessions on the national strategy will be held with provincial, territorial, municipal and local governments, as well as Indigenous groups across Canada, including in southern British Columbia. I am pleased to know that your organization will be represented.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to write to me on this important matter. I hope we can count on your continued support as the elements of our comprehensive national strategy are rolled out.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marc Garneau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the name.

The Honourable Marc Garneau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Transport

c.c. Ms. Sheila Malcolmson, M.P.
Nanaimo-Ladysmith