



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-00250**

BY: **Ms. BLANEY (NORTH ISLAND-POWELL RIVER)**

DATE: **MAY 6, 2016**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SERGE CORMIER**

Response by the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Canadian Coast Guard

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Canadian Coast Guard is committed to ensuring the safety of mariners and protection of the marine environment.

As part of this commitment, the Government of Canada is investing in the Coast Guard's infrastructure by replacing decades old marine communications equipment to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

While modernizing the MCTS Centres, the Canadian Coast Guard is leveraging technology to consolidate its centres at key locations in Canada. Due to advancements in technology, like the ability to automatically record and broadcast marine weather information from text, employees are better able to focus on their main duty to monitor and respond to distress and safety calls. This approach has led to modest reductions in the operating budgets needed to operate the centres, but also has had other advantages. For example, the installation of the same type and model of communications equipment across Canada not only streamlined operations, but also resulted in common equipment layouts; thereby leading to nationally consistent operational and technical procedures as well as maintenance protocols.

These changes have not affected mariners because the Coast Guard's network of radio and radar towers remained exactly the same as before; it is only the location from which these services are provided that has changed. In addition,

for the most part, the same employees will be providing the “ears and eyes” on our Canadian coasts; now from modernized centres with new consoles, screens, and upgraded technology.

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has studied the issues cited in the petition and has made six recommendations, including the recommendation to proceed, with caution, to close the Comox MCTS Centre. On May 10th, 2016 the consolidation of the Comox Area of Operation (AOR) into MCTS Victoria was successfully completed, therefore there is no compelling reason to reverse this or any other closure. Also, as recommended by the Committee, the Coast Guard will be monitoring the new system very carefully for at least the next 24 months for any problems or issues that may arise as well as conducting annual risk assessments.

As suggested by the petition, it would be costly to reopen the closed centres. More importantly, re-establishing these MCTS Centres would not improve the services provided to the mariner. The extent of services was not affected by these consolidations because the network of radio and radar towers remained the same. Coast Guard’s highly skilled, professional Radio Officers were simply shifted to the newly modernized locations without any changes to coverage areas. Undoing these consolidations would be a fundamentally unsound approach; not the least of which would be the significant funding needed to revamp the ten closed facilities and bring them up to the same standard as the modernized centres.

The new equipment allows Coast Guard to continue in its unwavering commitment to provide reliable, safe, and vital services to mariners in Canadian waters. Both modernization and consolidation are providing Radio Officers and Electronic Technicians with cutting-edge systems that are not only more reliable, but are flexible and adaptable. Because of these new systems, the Coast Guard will be able to continue to provide critical services to mariners in the years ahead.