

Press Release

CAW Local 2182 – Canadian Coast Guard

Port Alberni – December 29, 2011



For immediate release

The Canadian Coast Guard in Ottawa has announced that they intend to reduce staff on watch at Coast Guard Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centres beginning in January 2012.

Marine Communications and Traffic Services provide distress and safety communication, vessel traffic services and weather information, including lighthouse weather reports.

The intention of the Coast Guard in Ottawa is to reduce the number of officers on watch most of the year to save money. The Conservative government is reversing its commitment to coastal communities and the safety of Canadians from when they were in opposition.

The MCTS centre in Ucluelet regulates 12,000 vessel movements each year through Juan de Fuca Strait, many of them tankers loaded with north slope crude oil from Alaska and resolve 400 marine incidents each year.

CAW Local 2182 is concerned that the reduction of staff at the MCTS centre in Ucluelet will place undue risk to west coast mariners by leaving inadequate resources to draw on during emergency situations. The centre in Ucluelet is responsible for advising mariners and coastal communities via VHF radio of tsunami alerts in addition to their live saving services.

Highly trained MCTS officers provide a vital link between mariners and search and rescue resources. Vessel traffic services provide traffic advisories to shipping and regulate their movement to prevent the chance of collision and groundings, which cause significant marine pollution and loss of life. MCTS Ucluelet provides weather information, including forecasts, lighthouse weather observations and support to other government agencies such as the provincial emergency program, Parks Canada and the RCMP.

Cuts to the MCTS are part of the Harper government's national austerity program, which we feel are short-sighted, especially in matters of safety, security and pollution prevention. We are calling on the Coast Guard, and Department of Fisheries & Oceans, to reverse this decision.

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