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June 4, 2015

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Sent via Fax: 613-941-6900

Dear Prime Minister:

RE: Call to re-open Coast Guard Stations

I am writing on behalf of the BC Federation of Labour and the 500,000 union members we represent to voice our concern about the government's decision to reorganize Coast Guard operations and close a number of critical Coast Guard stations and communications centres on Canadian coasts. We are calling on the government to immediately re-open the Coast Guard bases and the communication centres and invest in marine safety and environment protection.

The Coast Guard bases and communication centres play a critical role in marine and public safety. The Kitsilano Coast Guard base in Vancouver for example, was the busiest Coast Guard base in Canada, responding to more than 300 calls for rescue and served Vancouver's Burrard Inlet, the busiest harbor in Canada.

The government's solution was to substitute the services of the Kitsilano Coast Guard base which took about 5 to 10 minutes to respond compared to the Sea Island Coast Guard, which takes 20 to 30 minutes to respond.

The toxic fuel spill in English Bay in April, 2015 shows very clearly why the decision to close the Kitsilano Coast Guard base was short sighted and needs to be reversed immediately. Coast Guard crews had to respond from the Sea Island Coast Guard base in Richmond, BC which took six hours to arrive at the scene and deploy an oil-absorbing boom around the cargo ship that released the substance.

The public supports a quality, public coast guard system that can prevent and respond to marine hazards quickly.

Prime Minister Harper, we are calling on you to immediately reverse your decision to reorganize the Coast Guard and re-open the Coast Guard bases and communication centres on the East and West coasts.

Sincerely,

IRENE LANZINGER
President

0500-15let IL Prime Minister Harper re Coast Guard stations

