



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Alistair MacGregor

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February 3, 2021

The Honourable Omar Alghabra
Minister of Transportation
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Alghabra,

In the spirit of your government's commitments to First Nations reconciliation, we are writing to you today to share our deep concerns with the current practice of freighter anchorages in the Southern Strait of Georgia.

As representatives of coastal Vancouver Island and Gulf Island communities, who have claim to these waters as part of their traditional territories, we know firsthand the fears, disdain, and anger that these vessels bring to their people. Moreover, when the anchorages were first established, the federal government continued to marginalize and isolate these First Nations communities, as they were never consulted, nor gave consent.

Through consultations with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, local First Nations communities have confirmed that, while anchored, these vessels routinely perform maintenance duties, including, but not limited to, the pumping of ballast tanks and bilges, paint and rust removal, and the dumping of garbage and waste. Furthermore, continuous ambient noise from generators, power washers, and anchor dragging have negative impacts on their health and wellness, and add further pressure on the already-threatened, delicate marine ecosystems around which their culture and livelihoods are built. Simply put, this cannot be sustained.

As you are aware, severe storms in the Southern Gulf Islands Region are not uncommon. There are regularly numerous freighters located within 400 meters of our shorelines, and a freighter dragging or breaking anchor and running adrift in such a storm would be potentially devastating to not only our beaches but the entire southern gulf. Spill response bases in Duncan and Nanaimo would be strained to arrive on scene within an effective time frame.

Local First Nations communities have also been burdened with cases of unsolved missing and murdered women. With little to no security apparatus established to safeguard their communities from the closely anchored vessels and their crews, their peoples are continually, and unnecessarily, fearful of foreign trespassers on their lands.

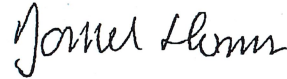
In 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated, *no relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples*. Minister, if your government is serious about honouring that sentiment, we wholly expect an about-face to consultations regarding this issue aimed at promptly eliminating the concerns raised above.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

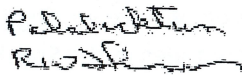
Sincerely,



Chief William Seymour, Cowichan Tribes



Chief James Thomas, Halalt First Nation



Chief Richard Thomas, Lyackson First Nation



Chief Joan Brown, Penelakut Tribe



Alistair MacGregor, MP Cowichan-Malahat-Langford