

The progressive opposition

# Press release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 26, 2020

## MP MACGREGOR INTRODUCES BILL TO ADDRESS FREIGHTER ANCHORAGES IN THE SALISH SEA

**OTTAWA** – Today, NDP MP Alistair MacGregor introduced [Private Member's Bill C-250](#) to amend the *Canada Shipping Act, 2001* to prohibit the anchoring of freighter vessels using coastal waters along the Southern Strait of Georgia. The bill is widely supported among local stakeholders including First Nations, local government, and community activist groups.

In addition to the noise and light pollution, the parked freighters, some of which are 300 meters in size, have caused serious concerns with potential pollution of the marine environment and the species that live there.

“There have been many years of frustration in trying to address this issue with Transport Canada and Transport Minister Marc Garneau. Despite these efforts, the number of freighters, and the length of their stay at anchor off the southern coast of Vancouver Island, have both increased,” stated MacGregor. “In the absence of leadership from the federal government, I have decided that it is time put forward a bill to try and resolve this issue through legislative means.”

Over the past several years, community groups and First Nations tribes have made repeated calls to Transport Canada to protect ancient clam beds, prawns, oysters, and endangered species, such as the southern resident killer whale, from the environmental impact of the anchored shipping vessels.

“The short- and long-term cumulative impacts on the marine ecosystems, local socio-economics, and pending disaster occurring while anchored or during transit to and from the Vancouver and Tsawwassen Port systems, need to be addressed,” said Doug Fenton of Anchorages Concern Thetis. “The Southern Gulf Islands' anchorage issues are an outstanding example of past practices going unmanaged and global corporations exploiting an aged mariners' law for corporate gains.”

“For years, we’ve been calling on the federal government to work towards eliminating commercial freighters anchoring in the Southern Gulf Islands,” said Peter Luckham, Chair of the locally elected, 26-member Islands Trust Council. “It is wholly unacceptable for this region, recognized as having some of the world’s most sensitive ecosystems and many species at risk, to be used industrially as an overflow parking lot for the Port of Vancouver. Coastal communities have watched with dismay as the number of anchored vessels rises year after year while the federal government fails to act.”

“The Port of Vancouver’s inability to schedule and manage incoming bulk cargo ships efficiently is a problem with serious economic and environmental consequences,” said Christopher Straw, spokesperson for South Coast Ship Watch Alliance. “As that problem increasingly spills over into BC’s Southern Gulf Islands, it is creating a financial drain on our national economy and threatening the ecological health of one of Canada’s most environmentally rich and important marine ecosystems. It’s time for Canada’s Minister of Transport to bring an end to this problem by directing all parties involved to create a modern, efficient and safe Vessel Arrival System.”

In February 2018, Transport Canada initiated its Interim Protocol for the Use of Southern B.C. Anchorages; however, the strategy is widely viewed by locals as a stopgap measure.

“The Interim Anchorages Protocol has proven to be totally inadequate in dealing with this problem,” said MacGregor. “The *voluntary protocol* measures installed by Transport Canada have been largely ignored and not enforced. Southern Vancouver Island and Gulf Island residents had hoped for, and deserve, more decisive action from their federal government.”

Through numerous roundtable discussions with First Nations in the region who have claim to these waters as part of their traditional territory, it was evident to MP MacGregor that First Nations were not consulted, nor did they give their consent when the anchorages were first established.

“These freighters sometimes drag their anchor, disturbing our seabeds and harvesting areas’, said Lyackson First Nation Chief Richard Thomas. “They have their lights on all night and make noise. They take away the beauty of our beaches. They harvest illegally and pollute our waters, and their proximity to our reserve lands makes our nation fearful of trespassers. We were never consulted on this and don’t support the freighters being in our waters.”

“Dialogue with government officials has confirmed that the pumping of ballast tanks, pumping of bilges, dragging of anchors, dumping of garbage and waste, and continuous noise from generators have combined to seriously threaten our livelihoods and traditional ways of life,” said Chief Joan Brown of Penelakut Tribe. “The Federal Government have the lawful obligation to consult with us prior to permitting freighter parking in our traditional waters. Penelakut Tribe have had absolutely no consultation from the Federal Government.”

The waters in the southern Strait of Georgia have been recognized as worth protecting by the federal government as a part of its process in establishing a National Marine Conservation Area. “If the federal government values these waters enough to establish a National Marine Conservation Area, then they also deserve protection from being used as an overflow industrial parking lot,” said MacGregor.

Further information on MP MacGregor’s bill can be found on his website at:

<https://alistairmacgregor.ndp.ca/news/mp-alistair-macgregor-introduces-bill-address-freighter-anchorage-salish-sea>

– 30 –

**For more information, please contact:**

Robert Martin: 250-746-2353 or [alistair.macgregor.c1d@parl.gc.ca](mailto:alistair.macgregor.c1d@parl.gc.ca)