



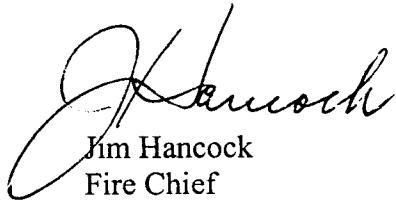
City of Richmond

Report to Council

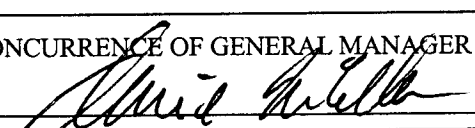
To: Richmond City Council
From: Jim Hancock
Fire Chief
Date: September 4, 2002
File: -
Re: UBCM Resolution - In Support of Canadian Coast Guard Hovercraft Replacement

Staff Recommendation

That Council endorse the resolution in the attached report (dated September 4, 2002 from the Fire Chief) to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, in support of a second hovercraft being commissioned to the West Coast of British Columbia.


Jim Hancock
Fire Chief

Att. 1

FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER


Staff Report

Origin

The Richmond Fire-Rescue Department has been advised that Hovercraft 045, stationed at Sea Island, will be ten years beyond its operational life on October 4, 2002. The hovercraft is scheduled to be removed from operational service due to its poor condition and no replacement hovercraft has yet been identified. The direct consequence of this will be the loss of rescue coverage in the shallows of the Fraser Delta.

Analysis

The Canadian Coast Guard is responsible for marine rescue in the Fraser Delta and the critical approach area of the Vancouver International Airport off the City of Richmond foreshore (Attachment 1). The Coast Guard has the exclusive mandate and responsibility to provide an adequate level of amphibious, dive-rescue capability, which will be severely curtailed due to the impending loss of one of the two hovercrafts, stationed at Sea Island. Delays in a proper replacement of hovercraft 045 could endanger lives in the event of maritime accidents or a plane crash near Vancouver International Airport.

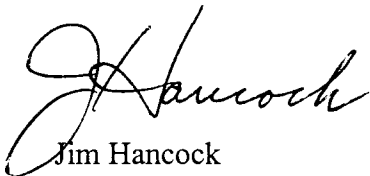
The recent capsizing of the fishing vessel, *Cap Rouge II* resulting in the tragic loss of five lives, further demonstrates the critical need for a modern, suitably equipped and staffed replacement hovercraft.

Financial Impact

N/A.

Conclusion

Council's endorsement of the resolution to the UBCM (Attachment 2) supporting the urgent need for a second hovercraft being commissioned to the Sea Island Coast Guard station will provide increased emphasis on the importance of a successful resolution to this matter.



Jim Hancock
Fire Chief

JDH:dm

**IMMINENT FAILURE OF MARINE RESCUE CAPABILITY IN
THE FRASER DELTA AND VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT AREA**

**Sponsor:
City of Richmond**

WHEREAS the Canadian Coast Guard is responsible for marine rescue in the Fraser Delta and the critical approach area of the Vancouver International Airport off the City of Richmond foreshore, (wherein the Canadian Coast Guard has the exclusive mandate and responsibility to provide an adequate level of amphibious, dive-rescue capability);

AND WHEREAS the recent capsizing of the fishing vessel, *Cap Rouge II*, resulting in the tragic loss of five lives, demonstrates the critical shortcomings in the Coast Guard's capabilities and response,

AND WHEREAS the hovercraft service is about to be dramatically reduced by the removal of hovercraft 045 from operational service,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of BC Municipalities petition the Federal Government to provide, as soon as possible, a modern, suitably equipped and staffed hovercraft, capable of meeting the service needs of the Richmond, Fraser Delta.



Coast Guard Dive Program (2002)

BACKGROUND:

In the summer of 2001 the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans reinstated a public safety dive team at the Sea Island Coast Guard Station in Richmond B.C. This move reversed a decision by the Commissioner of the Coast Guard to disband the team in late 2000. Coast Guard divers had been penetrating capsized hulls during the previous six years.

Following the Ministers announcement, senior Coast Guard management developed a policy that reduced the risks to its SAR divers, but also eliminated the potential to save people trapped inside vessels. Coast Guard prescribed new "limits" - loosely based upon CLC references to 'risk of entrapment' diving – these limits currently forbid diving into capsized vessels and submerged vehicles.

OBSTACLES TO CAP ROUGE SAR DIVE:

Fleet Safety Manual (FSM): The primary operational orders, and in particular those for diving, can be found in the Coast Guard's Fleet Safety Manual. The approved procedures for SAR diving include numerous prohibitions on attempting to penetrate capsized hulls under any operational circumstances.

These orders also contain many other instructions for shipboard personnel: for example to fight fires on other vessels it is in general required that crews 'shall not penetrate' burning vessels – unless there is an "opportunity to save a life". This is an important "thread" that can be found within the CLC itself.

Canada Labour Code:

The CLC does not specifically forbid this type of dive, in fact this type of diving is not mentioned within the regulations. However, section 18 of the code does require a 'back-up team' be present whenever there is a "likelihood of entrapment" to the primary divers. It is a CCG "interpretation" of what constitutes "likelihood" that generated the absolute prohibition on capsized vessel diving when the FSM rules were adopted.

It should be noted that section 18.67 of the CLC diving regulations does 'specifically' allow a diver to 'deviate' from its own depth limitations for the "purpose of saving a life...."

This CLC deviation is important because it is the common thread of "exceptions to the rule"... to accept higher 'risks' when the 'rewards' relate to saving lives. In considering the diversity of diving skills held by hundreds of different Federal Department divers – the section 18.67 requirement to have a back-up team present is a very reasonable one – particularly when the vast majority of those divers are "NOT" trained for the activity.

Reference:

Effective: Feb. 15, 2002

Approved:

519

Acting officer-In-Charge

Version:

Page:

Document

Draft

1 of 1

CCG Station Sea Island

MITIGATION OF RISKS:

However, in the case of Sea Island divers, there has been significant effort spent on training for these scenarios – including an in-depth analysis of inverted vessel stability, diving on vessel and vehicle mock-ups and derelicts, and inspections of aircraft and vessels at airports and marinas. Procedures and contingencies have been developed at the operational level to stabilize hulls of marginal safety, and equipment employed to minimize risks to the divers.

The Federal diving regulations became law in September 1998, and with them section 18.48 - back-up requirements for risk of entrapment diving – came under review by the Dive Team itself. No new restrictions were introduced in 1998 because it was concluded that given the level of diver training, the procedure of having ‘back-up’ divers merely ‘enroute’ was sufficient to meet both practical and regulatory requirements.

Recommendations: Program safety, and EFFECTIVENESS in the FUTURE:

The crew compliment aboard Sea Island Hovercraft should be increased from four to five. This would increase the effectiveness of the vessel during all Coast Guard operations, and allow for some immediate on scene ‘back-up diver’ capacity.

The Fleet Safety Manual prohibition on capsized vessel diving should be amended to address the issue of penetrating capsized vessels by the same manner in which fire-fighting is addressed: namely that the final decision shall rest with the divers and the C/O, and that decision will weigh the potential benefits for saving a life against the particular risks attending each scene. (NONE of Coast Guards Search and Rescue work is done ‘without risk’.)

The Coast Guard Team should add ‘surface supplied’ air equipment to its inventory for all capsized vessel incidents. This evolution would enhance diver endurance and safety, and also add to the ‘mitigation of risk’ that is prescribed by the CLC.

The Supervision of the Dive Team should rest with one competent person – as prescribed by the Departmental Diving Safety Procedures. That person should be dedicated to the task of training, and managing the deployment of Coast Guard divers. (In order to save funds, the current model proposes the splitting up of team duties within Station ranks.)

The pre-requisites for diving should be included in the work descriptions of all Sea Island Rescue Specialists as a ‘condition of employment.’

Reference:

Effective: Feb. 15, 2002

Approved:

Acting officer-in-Charge

Version: Draft

Page: 2 of 1

Document

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Briefing Paper on Impending Loss of Hovercraft Service on
the West Coast of Canada.

1. Hovercraft 045 will be ten years beyond its operational life on October 4th, 2002. The hovercraft is scheduled to be removed from operational service due to its poor condition and no replacement hovercraft has yet been identified. The direct consequence of this will be the loss of rescue coverage in the shallows of the Fraser Delta.
2. As an interim measure consideration has been given to leasing a commercial hovercraft or attempting to patch and temporarily repair hovercraft 045. A briefing paper on options will be submitted by the end of August.
3. For the past five years the Pacific Region has been requesting replacement hovercraft and project approval has recently been given. Recent information provided to ITS - Ottawa has revealed that the price of modern hovercraft is approximately 8 million dollars Canadian and that modern shipyards can build such vehicles near the intended area of operation.
4. In order to stabilize the West Coast situation for the long term it is urgently recommended that a small task force be created to fast track the design and construction of two modern hovercraft suitable for West Coast conditions. As project funding has already been approved this team would be able to start immediately. This move would demonstrate Coast Guard commitment to West Coast requirements and would resolve the current pressing problems. The hovercraft currently based in Vancouver meets the requirements of Laurentian Region. Upon the delivery of two modern hovercraft to Pacific Region the current hovercraft would be relocated to Quebec and both Regions would benefit from this action.

For additional information and details please contact Captain John McGrath at:

mcgrathjo@dfo-mpo.gc.ca (604) 278-7717 or (604) 952-4457

* The Hovercraft Base should be staffed to meet all the requirements of Search and Rescue in the Fraser Delta. Crews should be sufficient to allow complete year round coverage and to meet all the demands of training, rescue and diving.

AUGUST, 24th. 2002.

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THE VANCOUVER SUN

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Dhaliwal faces a coast guard mayday of his own doing

The problem is political — the federal government continues to dither over search and rescue resources for the B.C. coast

In March, controversy erupted over the federal government's failure to provide an adequate backup hovercraft to the Sea Island Coast Guard base. *Charlie-Hotel-Charlie-Golf-Delta 0-4-5*, which has been in service since 1969, was long past its natural retirement date — about 15 years past.

Since March, the government has dithered and dawdled, as it did before the controversy became public.

As far back as June 2000, an internal report warned of the impending problem. It noted that the two-hovercraft rule had been put in place in 1975, after an accident disabled the base's single hovercraft for six months. In that period, according to the report, "15 people died within 10 miles of the Sea Island base."

The long overdue decision to retire the 0-4-5 was made last fall, yet there is still no firm, clear plan in place to deal with its departure.

The urgency of the situation became even more evident last week when the *Cap Rouge II* capsized near the mouth of the Fraser River, killing five. The primary hovercraft, the *Siyay*, was undergoing routine maintenance, and the 0-4-5 was called into service. But it leaks, and it had to be pulled from duty midway through the incident, once the *Siyay* was available. The 0-4-5 can't sit idle by a capsized boat for long. Its engine also failed to promptly restart during the trip.

In March, in response to a *Vancouver Sun* editorial condemning the government's failure to provide the coast guard with an adequate backup, Canadian Coast Guard Commissioner John Adams said: "I can assure local residents there will be no disruption in their maritime search and rescue service."

With a bit of luck, he might be right. But both the public and the people who serve with the coast guard deserve more certainty and respect.

Not that we want to put all this at the feet of Mr. Adams, even though it was bureaucratic bungling that created the controversy in March, when bad typing, or bad math, or illegible handwriting, or simple inertia, or some other inadequate excuse put B.C.'s south coast behind, or just equal to, the St. Lawrence River in the bid for an additional hovercraft.

The problem is political, and the main responsibility lies at the feet of Herb Dhaliwal, minister of natural resources and the senior federal Liberal politician from B.C. He has failed to promptly address this need — an especially critical one given the Vancouver International Airport's presence on Sea Island and the unique ability of hovercraft to access the surrounding mudflats in the event of a disaster.

Mr. Dhaliwal is familiar with these issues. He was the fisheries minister — responsible for the coast guard — whose decision in February 2001 to disband the coast guard's dive unit was reversed five months later after a Richmond man died trapped underwater in his car.

And the issue isn't complicated — it's all about resources. Sure, we want the government to be fiscally prudent, but we want it to do that so it can afford a high standard of essential public services. Search and rescue is such a service.

Instead, we get indecision. We heap new responsibilities on the coast guard — boating safety, and soon licensing — without adequately increasing their resources. We get outdated coast guard hovercraft and military helicopters, and the closure of remote light stations that provide critical weather information and emergency rescue resources. All this occurs despite the statistical evidence that the coast guard's investment in saving lives also saves the government money, when all the long-term economic factors are taken into account.

And still the government dithers over its short-term bottom line.

Now there's talk about cutting service levels at the coast guard's Kitsilano base, extending the life of the 0-4-5 a few months past its long-overdue October retirement date, and postponing a planned refit of the *Siyay* until the spring. There's also talk about possible civil or criminal liability if the coast guard doesn't meet its legal duty of care.

In March, we offered Mr. Dhaliwal a chance to save himself when we called on him to take prompt action to address the issue. We're not going to attempt to rescue him again.

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News Release

Union of Canadian Transportation Employees

Budget Cuts at the Canadian Coast Guard Are Deadly!

OTTAWA - "Funding cuts are responsible for the Canadian Coast Guard's inability to perform its mandated marine rescue during the Cap Rouge II tragedy of last Tuesday," said Michael Wing, National President of the Union of Canadian Transportation Employees. "We firmly believe that the victims' chances of survival would have been greater had appropriate funding been given to the Coast Guard dive team to allow them to perform the required type of rescue when they first arrived on the scene."

This is not the only area that has been affected by funding cuts to the Canadian Coast Guard. It's been over a year since the Office of the Auditor General came out with a scathing report on mismanagement at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and specifically the Canadian Coast Guard. The department appeared before the Public Accounts Committee acknowledging the problems and vowing to make the necessary improvements. During these committee meetings, a high-ranking member of the department stated that, to return the Coast Guard to pre-1995 levels, they would need approximately \$400 million dollars.

"Since 1995, the Union of Canadian Transportation Employees has been sounding the alarm on the cuts being implemented at Coast Guard," added Wing. "The current government does not care about the safety of Canadians or the security of our shores and the marine economic activity that is vital to Canadians."

"The divers on the West Coast are proud to serve, as are all members of the Canadian Coast Guard. They only ask to receive the necessary training and support to do their job. Instead they have been restricted by senior bureaucrats who have hidden behind policy to defend their refusal to spend money on these life saving programs."

The Union of Canadian Transportation Employees calls on the Canadian public to hold Minister Thibault and the Liberal government accountable and to demand an Independent review of this department and all its programs so that tragedies such as Cap Rouge II do not happen again.

The Union of Canadian Transportation Employees (UCTE) is a component of the Public Service Alliance of Canada and represents 7,500 members working at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Canadian Coast Guard), Transport Canada, airports, NAV Canada and the Parks Canada Agency.

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For more information, contact:

Michael Wing
UCTE National President
(613) 238-4003

Dominic Vidmar
Communications Officer
(613) 238-4003, ext. 28

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each for the sky



er Dee Dietlein measures her Russian sunflower, which has grown to 14 feet tall in her front garden on No. 4 Road. She used seeds from her sunflowers last year.

COAST GUARD

Divers could have asked for permission

Fisheries minister says policy allows Coast Guard base to make decision to enter capsized boat

BY LEANNA JANTZI
ljantzi@richmond-news.com

Fisheries Minister Robert Thibault said rescue divers could have entered the *Cap Rouge II*, which capsized Aug. 12 off of Steveston, with permission from their Coast Guard base.

But he claimed the divers never asked to enter the boat because they were unaware of the option in the current policy that would let them perform the dive with authorization from their rescue coordination centre (RCC).

"I don't believe they knew that," Thibault said from Ottawa in a teleconference call Tuesday. "I believe that the policy is unclear."

He said permission can be given as the Canada Shipping Act allows for the RCC to set aside the Canada Labour code requirement of backup divers after a risk assessment is undertaken.

Delta-South Richmond Alliance MP John Cummins said Thibault's comments are just an attempt to divert attention away from the government and onto the divers.

"It's nothing more than an attempt to salvage some

credibility for the government on this issue," Cummins said.

To "in a round about way" lay the blame on the divers in the *Cap Rouge II* accident has Cummins upset.

"I think that's reprehensible to say the least," Cummins said. "To point the fingers at the divers and say

"To point the fingers at the divers ... that's pretty nasty, I've got a great deal of trouble with that."

— John Cummins, Alliance MP

the divers didn't get it. That's pretty nasty, I've got a great deal of trouble with that."

Federal officials were scrambling after an e-mail from Brian Wootton, the acting officer in charge of the Sea Island dive team, was leaked to the media.

In that letter, Wootton see *Divers* page 6

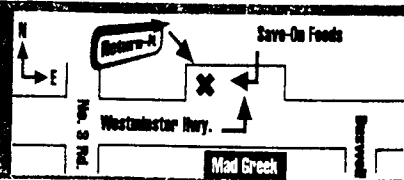
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COURTESY OF BCTV

Rescuers on the scene of the capsized *Cap Rouge II* earlier this month check the boat for survivors. Two people were plucked out of the water, while five others died.

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Wednesday in **Richmond News**

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Divers: MP says minister is trying cover up incompetence

Continued from page 1
says he was advised of a "new HQ authorization to conduct capsized vessel penetration."

"The recommendation of the team is all that the RCC controller(s) have to work with, so in effect this development returns the 'Go'/'NoGo' decision to the dive team itself," Wootton wrote.

Thibault responded the policy is not new, and added it has always applied and just needs to be clarified.

"Some people were under the understanding there was no way that you could do penetration," Thibault said.

"We wanted everyone to ... understand that under certain conditions penetrations could happen."

Cummins said the government is trying to cover up the incompetence of senior officials and the inaction of the fisheries minister's office.

"All of a sudden the minister's office in Ottawa goes berserk and puts out a press release that there is no policy change ... they're arguing semantics here."

Five people were killed in the *Cap Rouge II* accident. A two-person dive team from the Coast Guard's Sea Island hovercraft base waited 90

minutes for a backup team of military divers from Comox to arrive. The reason given at the time for the wait was a 2001 policy revision which prevents Coast Guard rescue divers from entering confined spaces.

Thibault said that even if the divers knew the policy, no other lives could have been saved.

"I think on the date in question, they did exactly what they should have done," he said. "As I understand it, there would not be a different result."

Canadian Coast Guard officials would not comment Tuesday.

ce Board



City of Richmond

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Review

Thursday, August 29, 2002

Divers can enter capsized boats

by David Marsh
MetroValley News

Canadian Coast Guard sea rescue divers have been given the go-ahead to enter capsized vessels.

Sources confirm that an e-mail to Canadian Coast Guard staff Monday from Brian Wootton, commanding officer of the coast guard's Sea Island hovercraft rescue station, instructs them to use their own discretion as to whether an overturned vessel is safe enough to attempt a rescue.

The new instructions, described as an interim measure, overrule a controversial policy whereby divers were forbidden to enter such vessels due to safety concerns.

The policy has come under fire in the aftermath of the Aug. 13 *Cap Rouge II* tragedy, in which five Galiano Island residents died when their fishing ship overturned 12 kilometres off the mainland coast.

However, Fisheries and Oceans Minister Robert Thibault said Tuesday that divers could have entered the vessel all along if they had asked for permission from the rescue co-ordination centre.

"I believe that the policy was unclear and should be clarified," he said, adding that he didn't believe a dive attempt would have made a difference in saving lives in this case.

First-response divers had to wait 90 minutes for backup before the *Cap Rouge II* could be entered. Critics say the policy could prevent lives from being saved, although investigations into the *Cap Rouge II* accident have not been completed.

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