



## *Press Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **CUTS TO COAST GUARD RADIO STATIONS PUT LIVES AT RISK**

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

Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) provide distress and safety communications, regulate vessel traffic, relay weather information, and play a vital role in marine security and the protection of the environment.

In December, Canadian Coast Guard officials made the decision to move ahead with plans to reduce staffing levels at eleven MCTS Centres, including the Regional MCTS Centre located in St. John's.

Described as a cost cutting measure, staff at St. John's will see a reduction from three officers on watch, down to only two during the critical night shifts. Ordinarily, when an officer takes time off, whether due to illness, vacation, or maternity and paternity leave, that officer would be replaced, ensuring that all three positions at St. John's MCTS were properly staffed. According to this new policy, the Canadian Coast Guard will no longer replace officers on any type of leave, leaving two officers to cover the three positions on night shifts.

Staff at St. John's fear these cuts will have a major impact on the safety of workers at sea, already compromised by the recent announcement by the Coast Guard to shut down the Newfoundland Marine Rescue Sub Centre, set to close in April. These reductions will inevitably hinder the centre's ability to monitor and respond to vessels in distress, putting lives needlessly at risk.

With its vast fishing industry, ever expanding offshore oil developments, and a growing number of cruise ships carrying thousands of tourists to the province each year, marine safety is increasingly crucial to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Disasters such as the Ocean Ranger, the crash of Cougar 491, and more recently the sinking of the cruise ship

Costa Concordia are prime examples of how fast emergencies can occur, and highlight the need for strong and effective Coast Guard support.

CAW Local 2182, the union which represents the staff at St. John's MCTS, is concerned that these cuts will place undue risk to mariners by leaving inadequate resources to draw on during emergency situations. The union is calling on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to contact their Members of Parliament, and express their concerns with these cuts which puts thousands of lives at risk.

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