

The Honorable Keith Ashfield,  
Minister for Fisheries and Oceans  
House of Commons  
Room 107, Confederation Building  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

January 30, 2012  
Via Fax and Email  
Fax: (613) 996-9955  
keith.ashfield@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Ashfield,

On behalf of the 350 marine communications and traffic services officers represented by our union, as well as 200,000 CAW members represented from coast to coast, I am writing to request a meeting to discuss the planned reductions in service hours at 11 MCTS centres across Canada.

I understand that this reduction in work hours is being done in an effort to reduce costs by the Canadian Coast Guard and, by extension, the federal government. I have read your recent public statements that suggest these cuts are intended to put “the proper resources in place when and where they need to be available.”

Minister, with all due respect, I cannot accept the premise that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, or the Coast Guard, can reduce the number of communications staff monitoring our waters and, at the same time, state with any certainty that this will not affect public safety.

As you are well aware, communication and traffic service officers are the eyes and ears of Canada’s coastal waters, providing critical safety services for distressed vessels as well as recreational boaters, kayakers and professional mariners. Restricting staffing levels at these vital MCTS centres only creates the conditions for failure. Fewer staff on watch means a crisis is less likely to be averted, or disaster struck. Why would you choose to run that risk?

You state that management has consulted on this issue with our members. I was not privy to those discussions, but I’ve been told by local leadership that the result has not adequately reflected their genuine concerns. I do know that previous requests from our local leadership to meet with you have been answered only by a formal, written letter.

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With full staff reductions set to commence on February 1, I ask that you consider my proposal to meet (in person or on a conference call) to discuss this issue as soon as possible. Minister, I think this is the best way for us to clarify any misunderstandings and relay to you, directly, our major concerns about this proposal and hope to reach some mutual agreement moving forward.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Lewenza". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken Lewenza  
President, CAW-Canada

cc: Hon. Fin Donnelly, Official Opposition critic for Fisheries and Oceans 613-947-4455  
Hon. Lawrence MacAulay, Liberal Party critic for Fisheries and Oceans 613-995-2754  
Hon Jean-Francois Fortin, Bloc Quebecois critic for Fisheries and Oceans 613-995-5184  
Martin Gregoire, President CAW Local 2182 418-386-3000  
CAW National Executive Board via email

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