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Coast Guard base closures draw protest

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Coast Guard officers and a diverse group of Vancouver organizations marked the Harper government's May 6 closure of the city's Coast Guard station with a rally that afternoon outside the shuttered Kitsilano base.

"Stephen Harper doesn't understand British Columbia," said Jerry Dias, National President of Unifor. "Harper is aggressively pushing for more oil tanker traffic and closing coast guard stations at the same time."

It's the fourth Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre (MCTS) to close.

Coast guard officers represented by Unifor Local 2182 say that the ongoing closures of MCTS centres across Canada threatens their ability to prevent shipping accidents and the capacity to provide a rapid response.

The federal government has already closed the MCTS centres in Ucluelet, Saint John, and St. John's and has plans to close the bases in Thunder Bay, Rivière au Renard, St. Anthony, and Comox.

"When a serious pollution incident happens, quick notification and response is key to limiting the spread of pollutants," said Chad Stroud, Unifor Local 2182 President.

"The Harper government is dismantling the west coast's prevention and emergency response system that has been in place for decades."