

September 11, 2009

To the Honourable Minister Shea and Honourable Prime Minister Harper:

The Georgia Strait Alliance (GSA) of Nanaimo and Vancouver, BC - a marine conservation organization whose mandate is to protect and restore the marine environment while promoting the sustainability of the Strait of Georgia, its adjoining waters and communities - fully supports staffed lightstations.

We believe that retaining the 27 remaining staffed lightstations - several of which are in the Strait of Georgia - is the best way to ensure the safety of the members of our community who travel on or over the waters of BC's West Coast and the safety of all those who come to visit our beautiful coastal waters. While we understand that the Coast Guard is primarily concerned with the navigational aid on lightstations - the light itself - we would hold them to their larger mandate, their motto of 'Safety First, Service Always'.

We want a human presence at these lighthouses. We want trained weather observers to inform us of the weather at these strategic locations 24 hours a day, every day of the year. We want a lightkeeper to be able to relay a distress call from a weak VHF. We want lightkeepers on hand to offer assistance to those who need it, to protect the stations, the aids to navigation and other equipment on hand.

We disagree with the Canadian Coast Guard when it states that its responsibility on lightstations only extends as far as the navigational aids. Staffed lightstations help protect the marine environment, play a major role in the safety of the public on our waters and help to ensure Canada's sovereignty and security by establishing a strong federal presence on our coastline. We ask the Canadian Coast Guard to rescind their plans to de-staff lightstations.

Sincerely,

Christianne Wilhelmson