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Heads Must Roll at the Coast Guard

OTTAWA— “Coast Guard bureaucrats in Ottawa and Vancouver have misled the public as to the real reason the CG dive team is prohibited from diving to rescue those trapped in capsized boats,” said John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-South Richmond).

Both Coast Guard (CG) Commissioner John Adams and the Regional Director for the Pacific Region, Mike Henderson, claim that the expense of creating a dive team that would comply with the requirements of the Canada Labour Code would not be cost effective and that the military are better equipped to operate in such rescues.

The truth is:

- The military are exempted from the Canada Labour Code.
- The CG divers can dive more safely because they have better equipment.
- The military divers do not have direct lines of communication to the surface whereas the CG does.
- The CG already provides continuous 24/7 hovercraft rescue service in Vancouver.
- The CG hovercraft rescue service carries a complement of four and so could easily meet the Labour Code’s safety requirements.
- The CG hovercraft service has requested the ability to provide air from the surface to its divers so as to comply with the Labour Code but their requests have been ignored by CG bureaucrats.
- Municipal and provincial police forces across the country comply with similar safety codes and we can expect no less for the Canadian Coast Guard.

“The decision by these two Coast Guard officials to ignore those trapped below the surface is a political and bureaucratic decision rather than a safety one. They have lacked the common decency to admit the truth,” said Cummins.

Neither Adams nor Henderson has any Coast Guard experience. Adams is a former army bureaucrat and Henderson is a fisheries biologist. “What is lacking at the Coast Guard is leadership with marine rescue experience. What is needed is leadership with marine experience that respects and believes in the Coast Guard’s mission,” Cummins added.

“A change in leadership at the Coast Guard is required immediately. CG Commissioner Adams and the Regional Director of the CG’s Pacific Region, Mike Henderson, must go. They must be replaced by officers with marine rescue experience from the uniformed ranks of the Coast Guard who can be relied upon to tell the truth even when it might embarrass their political masters,” concluded Cummins.

Contact: John Cummins, M.P.
(613) 992-2957, (604) 940-8040 or cell (604) 970-0937



John Cummins
Official Opposition Critic
Fisheries and Oceans

News Release
