

THANK YOU

The Quebec Marine Rescue Centre will remain open! (December 2013)

When the Honorable Keith Ashfield, then Fisheries and Oceans minister, announced in June 2011 the end of all activities at the Québec Marine Rescue Center (MRSC Québec), everybody was astounded by the unexpected and inexplicable announcement.

MRSC QUÉBEC had been in operation for 34 years. It was one of five maritime rescue centers in the country. Created in 1977 to respond to the increasing number of cases in eastern Canada, personnel of the emergency center had brought a high level of essential knowledge on a sometimes surprising St-Lawrence river, from Lake St-Francis to the Gulf St-Lawrence. More importantly, its personnel were able to respond to request for assistance in both English and French making MRSC Quebec the only bilingual maritime center in Canada.

Working for seamen and pleasure craft boaters, for fishermen and the general public, for passengers of aircraft in distress over the river and assisting many emergency organizations such as police, fire department and civil agencies, the MRSC Quebec has had to coordinate a lot of resources such as volunteers of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Association, with only one goal in mind: Saving human life in danger.

So, when the shutdown decision was announced in June 2011, instead of going to the abandon stations, a dedicated group of persons with SAR background decided to do what they knew the best: save the boat!

The decision to close the centers was based on an incomplete analysis. The lack of information on the problems and on all the impacts related to the closure of the centers misleads the minister when he announced the closures which were part of a new rationalisation program spending of the Canadian Coast Guard.

Based on a in depth review of all the services rendered by the MRSC Quebec, we were able to provide an actual and detailed portrait of what operations look like at MRSC Quebec.

Senator Kenny, you got personally involved, taking public position in support of MRSC Québec, especially in the Senate and in the Medias. The actual DFO Minister was made aware that MRSC Quebec was not only the sole bilingual center in the country but that it was also a multi-functional center responding to both distress calls and request for icebreaker assistance during winter time.

The Minister also learned that the equilibrium between the remaining rescue centers was very fragile and to transfer more than 1500 incidents a year to these centers could be very harmful.

The Minister was also made aware, thanks to the Official Language Commissioner, that it proved a lot more complicated to find specialized bilingual personnel in English speaking towns like Halifax and Trenton.

Finally, the Minister has observed that the personnel in the rescue centers of Halifax, Trenton and Québec were professionals who have always been able to manage the high level of responsibility associated with the particular workload and that it was a wise decision to listen to them.

We are grateful that the actual Fisheries and Oceans Minister, Mrs. Gail Shea, when presented with the relevant information, has chosen to act with an operational logic when announcing last December, through her colleague Denis Lebel, to keep open the MRSC in Quebec City.

It was with great relief that we received the announcement.

We believe that your involvement had a positive impact in the final decision and in the name of all mariners, fishermen, boaters, and their families, we just want to say:

Thank You!

"So others may live"

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Hubert Desgagnés". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and connected.

Capt Hubert Desgagnés,

Spokesperson for the Committee "Save MRSC Québec"

January 6, 2014