

September 28, 2016

Sent via email: mayor@victoria.ca

Mayor Helps and Members of City Council
City of Victoria

RE: Municipal involvement in marine oil spill response planning

Dear Mayor Helps,

I am writing to address some of the issues your government raised to the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project (TMX) Ministerial Panel in Victoria on August 22, 2016. I understand your government expressed concern that local governments have not been supported with emergency marine oil spill response planning and that local emergency responders have little to no oil spill response training.

Marine oil spill response is a federal responsibility, with training and planning historically focused on federal and provincial agencies such as Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada and the BC Ministry of Environment. Municipalities, however, do and have played important roles during an oil spill. That said, Western Canada Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC) recognizes this participation needs to be enhanced and strengthened and that a commitment from federal agencies, response organizations and municipalities is required to make this happen.

WCMRC has heard the concerns raised by municipal governments such as your own, as well as by First Nations and island communities, around the lack of local involvement and transparency in spill response planning. We too believe local communities, First Nations and municipalities should be integrated into marine response planning, and have initiated a number of measures to address these gaps in spill response planning.

For the past two years, WCMRC has been meeting with emergency managers, planners and responders from municipalities and communities that border the southern shipping route. Parallel sessions have occurred with First Nations along the route. As an example, WCMRC met with members of the City of Victoria's emergency planning team in August 2015 and continues to meet and work with emergency planners from the Capital Regional District.

During these sessions, WCMRC reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the different federal, provincial and municipal agencies during a marine oil spill. We discussed enhancement plans that would accompany an increase in vessel traffic, should the Trans Mountain project move ahead. And we examined opportunities for local involvement in spill response planning through Area Response Plan development and WCMRC's Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) digital mapping program, known as the Coastal Protection Program.

At the same time, we met with elected officials at all levels of government and with First Nation leaders to provide an overview of these community discussions. Our meeting with you and Council took place in December 2015.


This year we have held a series of spill response workshops that included the active participation of emergency planners, environmental planners and local subject matter experts in the identification of coastal sensitivities. These workshops were designed to involve municipal planners in the development of GRS's. The objective of a GRS is to reduce decision making time during the initial response to a spill and help identify potential equipment needs. Emergency planners from the Capital Regional District have played an important role during these workshops, helping to facilitate the sessions and ensure the right people are at the table. To date we have held workshops in Metchosin, Ganges, Sidney, Cowichan Valley and Victoria. We have also been working directly with First Nations on GRS development.

Later this year, WCMRC will be launching a public portal where emergency planners and the public can view the nearly 400 GRS's we have developed for the southern shipping lane. We will continue to populate this portal with new GRS's as we develop them. Our plan is to map all 27,000 km of BC's coastline.

WCMRC has been working closely with First Nations in spill response training to enhance their capacity to participate in exercises and responses as trained responders. We have provided training in the Incident Command System (ICS), Shoreline Worker Training, Contractor On-Water response training and Shoreline Clean-up Assessment Technique training. We value the local knowledge and expertise of First Nations as first responders in marine emergencies. In the southern shipping lane, we have contracts in place with three nations to assist in spill response, with three additional contracts pending.

A lot of work remains to further integrate communities and municipalities into spill response planning and we are committed to continuous improvement and collaboration with all of our coastal partners. If your government would like an update on our work this year, we would be happy to sit down again with you and Council to discuss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Gardner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" and last name "Gardner" clearly legible.

Kevin Gardner
President, WCMRC

