

## **Canadian Marine Advisory Council – Spring 2014**

The Minister of Transport, Lisa Raitt, addressed the Plenary session on Tuesday, the first time a Minister has attended in years. Her speech focused on commercial shipping but CSBC Chair Jean Murray raised the issue of small vessels and recreational boating during the question period. The Minister expressed interest in North American Safe Boating Awareness Week. A great contact made for the small boat community.

As well, Laureen Kinney has been appointed as ADM Safety and Security at Transport and Sylvain Lachance is acting as the Director General, Marine Safety and Security. Sylvain is the proud new owner of a slightly used sailboat berthed at Kingston!!

Even with a reduced presence within Transport Canada (more on this later!) the Standing Committee on Recreational Boating had a very full agenda. The usual suspects, sorry, subjects led the way with Pyrotechnics leading off. Larry Spears, of TC, reported that consideration was being given to reducing the number of flares required by half, to three, if within three to five miles of shore. A long discussion arose citing the use of VHF, SSB, 406 EPIRB's and PLB's as aids in SAR. Cell phone use was raised with Karen Harrington of the OPP noting that \*16 in the Great Lakes basin, would immediately connect you with the Rescue Coordination Centre. Concerns were expressed about cell coverage and the fact that VHF allowed the boater nearby to help out long before other SAR resources could respond. Paddy Boyd of Sail Canada questioned the need for flares at all, citing RNLi and TC stats that show that virtually no SAR incidents were first identified by flares.

Alternatives to flares are still being studied and Larry reported that the USCG will develop a standard and then forward it to IMO for their approval.

Larry continued with a review of the development of common North American Lifejacket Standards. This project is being led by UL in the US. Canadians represent about half the working group membership and the proposed Standard (ten parts) is based on a similar ISO Standard which hopefully will lead to common worldwide Standards for these critical devices. The current proposal is being balloted in September of this year for potential adoption in March 2015.

Among the proposals are multi chamber devices, hybrid devices (some inherent flotation supplemented by inflatable chambers) a 50 newton device, essentially a swimming aid and no more and youth inflatables. After the Standard is harmonized, we will have to have a discussion on which devices will be allowed in Canada.

A brief presentation was made on updates to the Vessel Operation Restriction Regs followed by a review of the Boating Safety Contribution Program, which included a great presentation about the Restigouche River, a Heritage River, which received a grant for various safety promotion purposes.

The PCOC program was also reviewed and it is great to note that the data base is now available to all marine enforcement personnel through CPIC. More importantly a complete re-write of the Regs is in the preliminary stages with a discussion paper expected for the fall CMAC. The new regulations are tentatively titled the Pleasure Craft Operation Regulations and as this will be an iterative process it should take several years before they are Gazetted. In the mean time the Rental Boat Safety Checklist has been completely revised and now has five versions based on the type of boat being rented. Pictograms are heavily used and the Checklists themselves are downloadable from the TC web site. A webinar for rental agencies will be held and this will lead to final changes to the Checklists. This is a big step forward.

Now to the meat of the meeting ! An extensive presentation was made regarding the changes within Transport Canada Marine Safety and Security and the creation of the Small and Fishing Vessel, Design and Equipment Standards and Boating Safety group within Domestic Vessel Regulatory Oversight and Boating Safety run by Julie Gascon. During the Powerpoint presentation there was no mention of the Office of Boating Safety's role in education despite it being previously listed as one of the eight key activities for OBS. At the same time, OBS activities have been distributed among several organizations. This started a heated response from the floor. Even though the small vessel community is easily TC's biggest client group and responsible for the highest number of incidents, it was evident that OBS was now considered less important. There were definitely storm clouds brewing!

Julie Gascon spoke at length and in a positive way about her commitment to make this work. From the small vessel point of view she recognized that a boat is a boat is a boat ! It was a good presentation but concerns still exist about the somewhat unwieldy structure of the new SAFVDAESBS and the lack of a focal point. That said, Ian Campbell was announced as the new Manager of the SAFDAESBS as well as the OBS and TC will continue to maintain an OBS head office. This was welcomed by the Standing Committee.

Luc Tremblay made a presentation about the harmonization of small vessel construction standards and Declarations of Conformity. Under the Regulatory Cooperation Council between the US and Canadian regulators, "red tape" is being cut. Part of this includes lifejackets and obviously the other major interest for boaters are the safety

considerations of the Construction Standards. These will focus on boats less than 6m in length and use the same standards, same monitoring system and the same recall mechanism in both Canada and the US. TC will quote the ABYC Standards which mirror the US Code of Federal Regulations. These will be published in French. Policy is under development and may be in place shortly. Compliance may be assured through several avenues including recognition of the NMMA Boat and Yacht Program. Vessels over 6m will continue to use the existing Construction Standards which reference ISO Standards in part.

Jean Murray, the Chair of the Canadian Safe Boating Council, made a well received presentation on the Council and the upcoming Safe Boating Week to close out the meeting. This included distribution of "Boat Notes", a condensed version of the Safe Boating Guide. Organizations interested in obtaining copies should contact the Council at [www.CSBC.ca](http://www.CSBC.ca).

### **National Recreational Boating Advisory Council – Spring 2014**

This meeting was co-chaired by Jean Murray and Sylvain Lachance. Members represent all areas and organizations in Canada. Sylvain noted that user fees were coming and would be used solely to fund the operations of the OBS. As well TC is going to make electronic vessel licensing available to anyone beginning in April 2015. He also expressed pleasure that the safe boating message was being heard as evidenced by the continuing demand for the PCOC.

Larry Spears provided a review of the Lifejacket work for those not present at 5th previous session.

Regional reports followed, which varied in their depth and the number of people attending regional RBAC's. This is a cause of some concern. Pacific was first, with Owen Bird of the BC Sport Fishing Institute reporting as the new co-chair. He noted great interest in the proposed Recreational Boating School Standard and also brought up flares ! Designated sewage discharge areas are also presenting a lot of issues to West Coast boaters.

Prairie and Northern have split into two RBAC's, one for the south and one for the north. This allows better discussion of issues and helps with travel costs which are a concern. The media have increasingly covered the safe boating message and the Calgary Fire Department on the Bow River has joined as a partner. Membership is an issue for PNR and they are working on renewal.

Mike Vollmer of Sail Canada reported on their last Ontario RBAC noting membership stood at 21 and was very positive. Issues ranged from the usual to Asian Carp, boating restrictions, NWPAs, Office of Boating Safety concerns, changes at CCG and a review of boating fatalities in the province.

Quebec outdid Ontario with 23 members and again reported a committed, positive group looking at a variety of issues. Concerns included repeat usage of the Rental Craft Checklist instead of getting a PCOC. They proposed limiting use of the Checklist to prevent abuse.

Atlantic reported a distinct drop in TC emphasis on recreational boating with a shift to small vessels and a general lack of communication on TC's part. Membership was also an issue as there were no representatives from PEI or New Brunswick. A Newfoundland RBAC continues and was meeting shortly after CMAC. Another concern was the use of the Safe Boating Trailers. Local volunteers were able to access these but, due to their cost, they couldn't be given to organizations and lending was being restricted. A spate of early season drowning brought some focus to Cold Water and the slogan "Not thinking – Still Sinking" seemed appropriate.

The OBS report was reprised from Tuesday but with new players in the room. The general sense was that the few people working on OBS issues were overstretched and there needed to be a review of the structure and especially consultation with the small vessel community. Communications is a key issue across the board and funding and staffing follow close behind. TC committed to including education in the core interests for OBS and agreed to review the issues raised.

NRBAC will meet again at the November CMAC.

Michael Vollmer

*Edited*