



Rachel Blaney

Member of Parliament
North Island-Powell River

February 4, 2022

Minister of Transport
The Honourable Omar Alghabra
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Sent via email to Thomas Potter, Assitant to the Mininster, tom.potter.378@parl.gc.ca

RE: Parliamentary Consultation: Transport Canada priorities

Dear Minister Alghabra:

Thank you for upholding your commitment to consult with all parliamentarians and for allowing a submission process on these important topics. Please consider this letter as my submission to the consultation process for the Oceans Protection Program (OPP).

My riding consists of coastal communities and that's why I am pleased to share the feedback received from constituents about the need for stronger commitments towards protecting our oceans. In particular, the issue of shipping container debris spills is a foremost priority for residents of North Island – Powell River.

In late October off the south coast of Vancouver Island, the Zim Kingston cargo ship encountered an incident that caused over 100 shipping containers to be lost at sea. Some have floated ashore, some have sunken, and many are still unaccounted for. An important factor as to why this is so significant, is that with these lost shipping containers comes large amounts of debris from packing materials like Styrofoam and plastics entering our waters, which breaks down and directly impacts our oceans and wildlife. Furthermore, some of the shipping containers contained hazardous materials.

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The effect of the lost containers is a devastation to our unique and vulnerable marine ecosystems and precious sea life. And yet, this is only one instance. News articles tell us that over 3000 shipping containers fell into the Pacific Ocean last winter alone. Accidents such as these are prime examples of why Transport Canada needs to work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard on coordinated responses to debris spills. Ship container debris spills impact the environment for decades. With 6000 container ships at sea around the world every day, we know this won't be the last time this occurs.

The response to container debris in our oceans requires expertise and experience in local and Indigenous traditional knowledge in our terrain and region. Crews that are sent in from outside our local communities do not understand dangerous areas or vulnerable locations as our residents do. Moreover, employing a local workforce to clean up the spills would also benefit the local economy, because of course, these local groups must be compensated for their work. I have learned, through consultations with residents on the ground doing these cleanups, that often the work continues long past the time we have stopped considering the impacts of the spills. For example, North Island residents are still cleaning up beach debris from spills that happened decades ago. There must be a fund created to support their ongoing work.

It's important that the gap and oversight between departments on responding to debris spills is addressed. We must be better prepared to respond to incidents so we can better protect our coast from the worst impacts, and to ensure that ship owners operating in Canadian waters can be held accountable and responsible for as long as the impact exists.

My colleague Lisa Marie Barron, who represents Nanaimo—Ladysmith in response to this spill, tabled [M-41](#) – the Emergency coastal debris spill response plan. The motion states:

That, in the opinion of the House, given the events surrounding the fire and cargo loss on the MV Zim Kingston on October 22, 2021, and the importance of local traditional knowledge in a coordinated response, the government should develop an emergency coastal debris spill response plan which would include the following measures:

(i) immediately deploy a local workforce to support spill containment, shoreline cleanup, and mitigation of environmental impacts,

(ii) publicly release a full accounting of the environmental impacts of the spillage, including a manifest of all missing cargo,

(iii) ensure that the operators are held financially liable for the full cost of the cleanup.

I am pleased to include feedback I've received from constituents about this critical issue.

- **On accountability measures:**
 - Shipping companies need to be responsible for all the costs and damages to the oceans or post adequate bonds to pay for any costs incurred. There should be an insurance policy for all ships that reflects future damages and recovery of lost containers and/ or associated pollution costs.
 - We should absolutely be recovering the missing containers, specifically focusing on removing the hazardous ones first.
 - We should hold all large corporations to account – they are at the forefront of the pollution and climate change crisis.
 - Safer practices will likely emerge once accidents begin to affect corporations' bottom lines.
 - They shouldn't be allowed in our waters until they've found and removed their lost cargo.
 - When there is a spill of containers, the manifest should be made public

- **On reducing the use of Styrofoam and other non-biodegradable packaging:**
 - Outlawing plastics are a half measure solution – we should also be imposing a hefty waste tax on all single use items including packaging, containers, and products.
 - We need to use environmentally friendly materials, backed up with inspections.
 - Perhaps we can replace these materials with the plant-Styrofoam that's made from potatoes and breaks down the second it hits water or we can use paper, fungus-based or other organic packing materials.
 - Using packaging that is harmful to the environment must go. Please push for more sustainable packaging and less packaging in general. No more Styrofoam and/ or other non biodegradable substances.
 - We should absolutely phase out these harmful products – governments should take responsibility here through regulations and laws.
 - We should outright ban Styrofoam in shipping products and plastic – why do our fruit need to be wrapped in plastic at grocery stores?
 - We request the Provincial and Federal Governments prohibit the use of expanded polystyrene (EPS) in the marine environment.

- **On building a local, coordinated response team:**
 - A quick response to clean up after an accident will help prevent devastating ecological problems.
 - Local Indigenous communities should be contacted immediately and they should be the ones who are in charge of the clean up
 - To deal with unfortunately more disasters like this one, oil/fuel spills and fisheries violations, I would like to see the most qualified persons given the resources,

- equipment and skills to be First Responders. Initially they should be involved in developing their own training and response protocols. They should be supported and unhampered by the various levels of government. The best suited for this job is the local First Nations and their neighbors
- Clean up crews could provide employment for many. We could also create a committee with coordinated volunteers. Negotiations to get these contracts in place must be immediate.
 - Yes, this can be mobilized immediately under clear direction.
 - I believe we need to restore the Coast Guard stations that the government shut down. They will have well-equipped and well-trained response teams with clear jurisdiction.
 - The response team should be compensated at the expense of the company.
- **On ship container designs and content:**
 - Many of the container ships are in very poor condition, we should insist that they meet our standards before entering our waters. No exceptions.
 - To load a ship with a deck load as high as they do on these container ships would be unheard of and stupid back in my day. The proof is in the number of ships that come into port with damaged containers and missing ones that are left floating around, or on the ocean bottom. Redesign the damn ships so they can cross the ocean without spreading the cargo all over the place.
 - If a material is defined as hazardous, surely we should treat it with above average care. Stacked with other 'regular' containers, on ships known sometimes lose a few, doesn't meet my definition of above average care.
 - Containers holding toxic waste need sonar on them or something so that they can be recovered.
 - We should store hazardous materials in a way to minimize chances of leakage that may afford more time to be safely retrieved and secured if there is an accident.
 - Maybe we can use bio-degradable containers.
 - As a boat guy, how are these containers even falling off the vessel? They are obviously not being secured properly – standards should be in place for vessels entering Canadian waters.
 - **On the consumerism mindset and shopping local**
 - People should be buying locally as much as possible.
 - We should encourage domestic product, discourage plastics use, discourage export of natural resources, and tax the hell out of imports we could have made ourselves. We need to subsidize green, local businesses and follow a travel less, communicate more ideal life that promotes healthy, harmonious living.
 - Manufacturers need to produce products that last longer, like they did 30 years ago.

- The issue is our consumerism mindset and that we define our status and self worth by what we own. We see trade across the oceans as necessary, and I think we need to change that thinking. We should be asking “what do we really need and why can't we get by with what we can produce here in our own local area and country?” We need to ban all forms of advertising. Educate our children on ways to survive with less, to want less. Stop promoting the term "middle class.” We only need the basic needs of housing, clean water, locally available food and a sense of community.
- Underlying problem = we shop too much, therefore we ship too much.
- Please advocate for a circle economy.

- **On regulations:**
 - Stricter regulations and enhanced enforcement should apply to cruise ships.
 - Canada is very lax in this area compared to the US, resulting in Canadian waters receiving the bulk of negative environmental outfall from this allowed-to-be-dirtier-in-our-waters industry.
 - Working both with shipping companies and having the government set higher regulations.
 - Higher premiums for any hazardous material.
 - Stronger penalties for noncompliance with transport Canada regulations and vessels can be subjected to inspection on suspicion of this.
 - Large ocean-going vessels use a tremendous amount of ballast water which is discharged on port entry to minimize risk of grounding. Regulations for filtering/treatment of this water should be implemented and enforced to ensure contaminants such as invasive species are not released into our waters.
 - Current measures may not provide us with the enforcement mechanisms enabling us to make a difference where it counts.

- **On international trade:**
 - I would like the Federal Government to have a long-term plan, say 10 years, to decrease our dependence on overseas goods, even if China or other Asian countries can produce them a little cheaper. This would hopefully decrease the number of container ships plying the ocean and decrease that carbon footprint. I believe we need to consume less and restore and regenerate more. This applies very particularly to Canadians. We are such HIGH carbon emitters.
 - Maybe need to work on minimizing overseas purchasing?
 - Maybe reopen factories in Canada and not have these main carbon polluters in our waters delivering what Canadians can make in Canada.

I would be pleased to meet with you if you need further clarification of any of this information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Blaney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large, stylized 'B'.

Rachel Blaney, MP for North Island-Powell River

Cc: Lisa Marie Baron, NDP critic for Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard