

CANADIAN COALITION FOR
Maritime Security

News Release

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National Security Policy Ignores Canada's Port Operators

Vancouver, BC— Unfunded security regulations at Canada's ports and maritime facilities leaves a gaping hole in the federal government's new national security policy that was released today.

The Canadian Coalition for Maritime Security is frustrated that the security statement fails to recognize the key role port operators play in Canada's national security network and neglects to clarify what, if any, funding will be made available for operators who have been mandated by Ottawa to implement costly national security upgrades.

"Without funding for implementation of the national security regulations, Canada's maritime facilities could represent a national security vulnerability," said Tim Chapman, spokesperson for the Canadian Coalition for Maritime Security. "We have repeatedly asked that Ottawa act without delay to commit funding or run the risk of some marine facilities not being able to comply with the federal government's requirement for port operators to spend \$100 million in the next 60 days."

The Coalition is concerned that today's announcement commits funding to government agencies but ignores immediate requirements of port operators who are part of the government's frontlines of border defense.

"Marine security is a key component of national security. It's a federal responsibility that requires federal financial support," said Chapman. "It seems that port operators are carrying all the cost for Canada's national marine security initiative, while the government funds government agencies and blatantly ignores port operators."

The Coalition is concerned that unless the federal government gets serious about supporting security costs at maritime facilities with funding, Canada's new national security policy will not receive a warm welcome from the US. Prime Minister Paul Martin is scheduled to meet President George Bush later this week to discuss Canada's commitment to national security.

"To ensure uninterrupted trade and an open border between Canada and the US, Ottawa must meet its national security obligations with the financial resources that will make our marine security regulations stick, and show the US that Canada is a committed partner to continental security," said Chapman.

The Coalition estimates that the cost of compliance to Transport Canada's 600-plus port security regulations could cost Canada's maritime operators well over \$100 million, a fraction of the \$700 million in funding the US government has already dedicated to improving security at US ports and private facilities.

“The federal government should not ignore the competitive pressures from heavily-funded U.S. port operators who, in the absence of funding for Canadian operators are becoming more cost-effective gateways for North American trade,” said Chapman.

New federal port security regulations require a heavy investment by port operators in surveillance equipment and more security patrols, along with other facility upgrades. Many operators are already incurring significant costs to meet these security measures.

The Canadian Coalition for Maritime Security represents private-sector maritime operators from British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia, in addition to maritime associations from across Canada on the issue of security at Canada's ports.

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