



I'm ready to answer the question about supertankers

In this issue we continue our look at tanker traffic on the West Coast and oil spill response and preparedness. We have a number of perspectives — Tom Hawkins with Bernard & Partners outlines the impact of criminalization of seafarers in pollution incidents; Ray Dykes joins Joe Spears in considering the question of whether the coast is ready for supertankers, however, unlike Joe's article, which focuses on the oil spill response regime, Ray looks at the business argument for supporting Enbridge's Northern Gateway project.

The best "surprise" article however came unsolicited in the form of a letter from George Adams, long-time industry leader, who raises a number of points that have so far been missed by many and worth repeating here.

Specifically, George points out two things:

1) "Much has been made..of the size of the ships to be employed in carrying the product from Kitimat to market — 320,000 deadweight tonnes has been quoted...From a safety point of view, and ignoring the economics, one can imagine the potential for congestion and increased risk of collision if say 10 32,000 deadweight-tonne ships were used in place of each of the proposed supertankers...";

2) "In speculating on the inevitability of a collision or grounding it has been assumed that the whole cargo will be spilled. This is not correct. In addition

to increased safety resulting from double-hulled tanker construction one should understand that the space in which the cargo is carried is divided into smaller, separate tanks. There is absolutely no reason why, in the unlikely event of an accident, spillage would not be confined to a small percentage of the total cargo."

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It's difficult to argue with logic and on both of the points above, George is certainly speaking with a solid knowledge of the realities of the shipping industry.

So, there you have it. *BC Shipping News* has, over the past year, hopefully provided enough information and argument (from both sides of the debate) to allow you to form your own, educated opinion on whether B.C. is ready for supertankers. As for my own opinion, I've learned that there are enough safeguards in place to greatly minimize the risk of an oil spill on the water — so much so that I confidently support increased volume and traffic. However, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't be continually upgrading our skills and abilities for spill response — especially

for large spills where attention is needed most. It's only common sense to never say never and as Joe so appropriately notes: "We need a truth-to-power discussion with all interested parties if we are to be ready..."

In addition to the tanker traffic debate, and as per my note in last month's editor's note, we also look at the North American Emission Control Area that is due to take effect this August. It's fortuitous that we have included an article — *Meeting the challenge: The North American Emission Control Area* (co-authored by myself and Stephen Brown) — at the same time we feature the cruise industry and herald the beginning of the 2012 cruise season.

As you'll read in the *Industry Insight* with Greg Wirtz, President, North West and Canada Cruise Association, the lack of supply of low-sulphur fuel that meets ECA regulations has the potential to greatly affect the one sector of the industry that has already made incredible strides in advancing technological solutions to address air quality issues. Greg is hopeful that regulators will consider performance-based standards rather than prescriptive directives that include a fuel currently unavailable in the West Coast market.

Maybe Greg should get George Adams to look at this issue and submit another letter. You can't beat an argument that is based on logic. **BCSN**

— Jane McIvor

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