

Transport Canada's Canadian Marine Advisory Council (CMAC) – Spring 2013 Meeting

The Spring meeting of CMAC was held in Ottawa from April 23 – 25 and progress was reported on several Recreational Boating Standing Committee agenda issues.

The first and major item on the agenda was Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) and a report on the potential adoption of new North American standards based on ISO 12402-5. Questions were raised about the potential of adopting 50-Newton buoyancy aids as a new flotation standard in Canada (currently, PFDs provide 70 Newtons of buoyancy, but are bulkier as a result). Discussion ensued about the limited buoyancy of 50-Newton devices, the need for a wearer to be a good swimmer, and that their sanctioned use should be restricted to no more than two nautical miles from shore. Inflatable PFDs for children were also discussed; the US Coast Guard (USCG) already permits their use by children over 12 if they are auto inflators and do not require secondary donning (that is, no pouch types).

Also discussed were pyrotechnics; Transport Canada (TC) is monitoring work by the USCG on alternatives and has published proposed lifecycle care requirements in Part I of the Gazette. Currently, Comet and Pains Wessex will take back expired flares for no charge and CIL will do the same in Quebec.

The Boating Safety Contribution Program garnered praise when TC announced a doubling of the grant size per year to \$975,000 and that, more importantly, in-kind contributions will be recognized for up to 25% of the contribution.

An update on the Pleasure Craft Operator Competency (PCOC) program was tabled: some 3.4 million cards have been issued to date, and 355,000 issued in the past year alone. Access to PCOC records is being provided on a limited scale through the CPIC computer link for all police forces, with full access expected later this year. Presently, some 2.6 million vessels are licensed.

The Office of Boating Safety (OBS) report referenced a Transport Canada focus on pleasure craft licensing, Small Vessel Regulations, boating restrictions and the PCOC in the face of resource constraints. Also noted was a plan to reduce outreach programs in favour of working with partners.

For many volunteer organizations and sport governing bodies, the issue of safety and coach boats poses a problem under the current regulatory regime. Transport Canada is producing an interpretation based on the current regulations which they expect to publish near the end of May. It was requested that this be circulated to the affected organizations prior to publication.

On the small commercial vessel front, a separate meeting was held to address the *Contraventions Act* application; TC noted that the project was on hold due to staff retirements. Outfitter organizations also wished further clarification on the separation

between commercial and recreational use. TC noted that the Small Vessel Regulations were being amended to cover commercial operations up to 24 m in length. As well, the Rental Boat Safety Checklist was under review, but no amendments are expected until discussions were held with the affected parties.