

April 2023

Ref: The Steam Tug **Master** and the formal recognition of BC's Maritime Heritage

Dear

I write to you today, in your capacity as a representative of a BC community with maritime ties, on a matter of some urgency.

The iconic steam tugboat **Master** was a century old last year and although in remarkable repair for her age, is vitally in need of some restoration work. **Master** (as well described in the thorough article published in Towing Lines of the Netherlands (see Ref.1)) is exceptionally important to BC's maritime history for the following reasons:



1. **Master** was built in Vancouver in 1922 by renowned shipwright Arthur Moscrop (the builder of the RCMP *St. Roch*)
2. Except for some hardwood trim, **Master** is built entirely of timbers grown in BC, principally Douglas Fir
3. **Master** is the ONLY wooden-hulled, steam-powered tugboat still afloat and in operational condition **IN THE WORLD**
4. **Master** has been specifically recognized by Parks Canada and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) for the historic significance of tugboats of Canada's West Coast in the economic development of BC.
5. **Master** is a beautiful and iconic example of the steam tug era in BC's coastal history and deserves to be restored and maintained to educate future generations of BC citizens about the role of tugs in BC's coastal development.
6. For 60 years **Master** has been in the care of a dedicated group of talented (but aging!) volunteers, the SS Master Society, who spend many hours caring for and maintaining her. They now need your support!

The critically important first step in making this happen involves the formal establishment of a Registry of Historic Vessels of British Columbia. Nowhere in Canada are operational heritage vessels recognized. There is support for land-locked vessels such as *St. Roch*, *Moyie* and *Klondike*, and even for sunken wrecks, but not for the more venerable **Master** and others of her ilk that are still afloat, having been cared for by dedicated owners and volunteers. The preservation of BC's maritime history, in the case of truly important historic vessels, is entirely the responsibility of private individuals who care. This must change.

In most other maritime countries, there are excellent examples of how Heritage Vessel designations are documented and controlled. In particular, the UK has done a wonderful job of creating registries for vessels of all types, including small craft. Their documents on this topic (see References) are the ideal template for the creation of just such a registry for BC or indeed for Canadian vessels.

We ask for your immediate support in advocating within the BC Government for this most important first step in recognizing BC's maritime heritage: Establish a "**Registry of Historic Vessels of British Columbia**" within the jurisdiction of Heritage BC. We, supporters of BC's maritime heritage need a champion within the halls of power. Establishing this provincial registry will hopefully ultimately lead to the creation of a comparable National Registry.

Please support us in this appeal for proper recognition of the boats that have helped to build BC.

Yours Faithfully,

References:

1. <https://www.ssmaster.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-steam-tug-Master-centenary-project.pdf>
2. <http://ral.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/BCSN-Mar19-Pg32-34.pdf>
3. UK Heritage Vessel references:
 - a. <https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/>
 - b. <http://heritagehelp.org.uk/organisations/national-historic-ships-uk>