



SEP 25 2018

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro, P.C., M.P.
Chair
House of Commons Standing Committee on
Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Sgro:

On behalf of the Government of Canada, we would like to thank the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities for its report, *Canada's Ocean War Graves*, which was tabled in the House of Commons on May 28, 2018. Please accept this letter as the Government's response to your report.

Ocean war graves deserve respect and recognition as the final resting place of people serving in or under Canada's military and foreign military forces. The Government appreciates the Committee's concerns and acknowledges that there is a gap with respect to the protection of ocean war graves.

The Parks Canada Agency and National Defence, with support from Transport Canada and other relevant departments, are working together to identify an appropriate protection framework for the final resting places of those who lost their lives serving their country. The Government is open to supporting an amendment to Bill C-64 – the proposed *Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act* – to allow existing legislative regulation making authorities for the protection of wrecks that have heritage value to be applied to wrecks of vessels or aircraft of Canadian military forces and of foreign military forces. This proposed regulatory authority could form the basis for a future regulatory protection framework for military wrecks, including those that may contain the remains of military personnel. Should such an amendment be presented to the Committee, it is our hope that the Committee members would support it.

In developing a regulatory framework, consideration would be given to the concerns raised in the Committee's recommendations including the need for appropriate sanctions and penalties, consideration for the inclusion of different types of military vessels (i.e., merchant ships lost in military service), and the protection of ocean war graves resulting from future conflict.

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Relevant Ministers would be pleased to provide an update on the progress made on new legal protections for military wrecks, including those that may contain the remains of military personnel.

Further, the Government of Canada agrees that, where appropriate, steps will be taken to request protection of any Canadian vessel in foreign waters, for which the location is known and which may or may not contain the remains of Canadian military personnel, to the full extent permitted under the domestic laws of the nation responsible for those waters and in a manner consistent with international law. The Department of National Defence will continue to work with Global Affairs Canada to request this protection through diplomatic channels on a case by case basis.

We would like to thank the Committee members for your excellent work and more specifically, for your vision and commitment to this important issue.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Catherine McKenna, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Environment and Climate Change



The Honourable Harjit Singh Sajjan, P.C., OMM, MSM, CD, M.P.
Minister of National Defence



The Honourable Marc Garneau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Transport