



# RCMSAR supports public safety mandates

By Christine Gross, Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue

Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue is part of a proud tradition of volunteer lifeboat services on the West Coast dating back more than 100 years. Focused today on continuing this legacy as a supporting agency to the Canadian Coast Guard, RCMSAR is also a key partner in broader community-based marine safety.

To ensure readiness, RCMSAR regularly holds exercises for its crews throughout the West Coast. However, a broadened role for the organization in supporting province and local governments has meant expanding the scope of this year's training activities.

## SAREX 2018

RCMSAR is already highly trained and on call to respond to an extraordinary range of taskings every day of the year. In order to build on this training, SAREX held annually each September at the Albert Head Training Centre in Metchosin, B.C., an RCMSAR-led a multi-agency exercise aimed at practising interoperability with search and rescue partners.

Two Memorandums of Understanding, both signed last year, provided the impetus

*“Creating that understanding and building those relationships between different agencies can only improve and help our joint effectiveness in the heat of the moment.”*

for SAREX 2018 and created a broadened focus. The first, an MOU signed with the Province of British Columbia better enables RCMSAR stations to assist their communities directly and more broadly in times of emergency and disaster.

“Over the past couple of years, part of our strategy has been to provide a bonding agent, through our agreements, between the various levels of jurisdiction and responsibility on B.C.’s coast and in the interior,” said Pat Quealey, RCMSAR CEO. “By diversifying our service accessibility to multiple levels of government, we are helping fill the gaps and tighten the seams between organizations with legislated mandates for public safety.”

This formal agreement facilitates the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance by RCMSAR to support the mandates of B.C., local governments and their agencies, and it permits a new

approach to emergency preparedness collaboration.

“Our 2018 SAREX was an opportunity to train and practise with different resources and responders,” said Ralph Mohrmann, Director of Readiness with RCMSAR, and the exercise’s primary organizer. “For many of our members, it’s not something they typically get to do. Creating that understanding and building those relationships between different agencies can only improve and help our joint effectiveness in the heat of the moment.”

SAREX 2018 was the largest training event to date of volunteer search and rescue personnel from across B.C. and it introduced a series of scenarios that saw many emergency response groups work together for the very first time.

“The opportunity to train and practise together can highlight any challenges that should be addressed before an actual



Photo courtesy RCMSAR / Ken Burton

## SEARCH AND RESCUE



Pat Quealey, CEO and Ralph Mohrmann, Director of Readiness, RCMSAR.



Scenes from SAREX 2018.

emergency, and ultimately it improves crew confidence for when and if different agencies are called upon to work together,” said Mohrmann.

RCMSAR members learned from, shared information and worked alongside members of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol, Ground Search and Rescue crews, Civil Air Search and Rescue PEP Air, the RCN and CCG.

“Interoperability is less about equipment and things working together, but more importantly about people working together,” Quealey said. “Ultimately, I think this is the public’s expectation of all of us and I am proud of RCMSAR’s efforts to be an agent of change towards achieving that goal.”

The participation of B.C.’s 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol members was an important milestone as the second MOU RCMSAR, signed in 2017, acknowledges the value of sharing expertise and knowledge between the two organizations.

RCMSAR shares geographical territory with the Rangers, and both organizations are key to supporting emergency preparedness activities along B.C.’s rugged coastline. The joint training and exercise opportunity provided by SAREX 2018 represents one of the first products of the 2017 Ranger / RCMSAR MOU, and the first time the principles behind the agreement were put into action.

“Because they’re based at a community level, having the Rangers there was an important step in building that relationship and facilitating humanitarian support in the future,” said Mohrmann.

### Contributing to West Coast marine safety

As a vital part of the marine safety community on the West Coast, RCMSAR is often called upon ‘in the heat of the moment.’

Volunteer-based with more than 1,100 members and 33 rescue stations, RCMSAR crews respond to about a third of all maritime emergencies in the province, amounting to, on average, over 800 missions every year.

“RCMSAR is proud to be a member and contributor to the local marine industry, with a fleet of over 45 dedicated response vessels developed and manufactured here in B.C.,” said Quealey.

Photos courtesy RCMSAR

As an independent charity, RCMSAR depends on funding through a contribution agreement with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, grant support from the Province of British Columbia and donations from industry and private citizens.

“Now more than ever, RCMSAR is integrated as a community partner in marine safety,” said Quealey. “Through our formal agreements to support federal, provincial and local mandates, our stations are available as an incredible asset to communities. We rely on community support to be able to provide this service. Our crew members are also community members and they are committed to helping their neighbours in times of need.”

RCMSAR’s community-based stations provide on-call service 24 hours a day, year-round, both in highly populated areas such as greater Vancouver and Victoria and in more remote communities along the mainland North Coast and the West Coast of Vancouver Island. In many places, help would be hours away if not for the presence of an RCMSAR station and vessels, ready to launch in under 30 minutes.

“Ideally, we want to reach an end-state when organizational and jurisdictional boundaries that limit our freedom of action and effectiveness are overcome by our will to work towards a common purpose,” said Quealey.

## World Maritime Rescue Congress

Contributing to the evolution of maritime search and rescue operations will be a strong focus for RCMSAR in the year ahead. Rather than focusing exclusively on regional operations, the organization will be hosting the global maritime search and rescue community at the International Maritime Rescue Federation World Maritime Rescue Congress, taking place in Vancouver June 15-18, 2019, at the Vancouver Convention Centre.

Held every four years by the International Maritime Rescue Federation, the theme for WMRC 2019 is “Learning from the Past; Looking to the Future — Maritime Search and Rescue in a Dynamically Changing Operational Environment.” RCMSAR is part of a global network of marine search and rescue agencies that are members of the International Maritime Rescue Federation.

This congress is the first such gathering in Canada and it will attract marine industry and search and rescue representatives from around the world to learn and share informed practices.

“Hosting WMRC 2019 brings this network of knowledge to Canada and presents an opportunity for our collective learning here,” said Quealey. “It also allows us to highlight the Canadian SAR system, and indeed celebrate the uniquely West Coast model of dedicated response vessel volunteer rescue stations that RCMSAR provides to our partners and the communities of British Columbia.”

## A call for partners

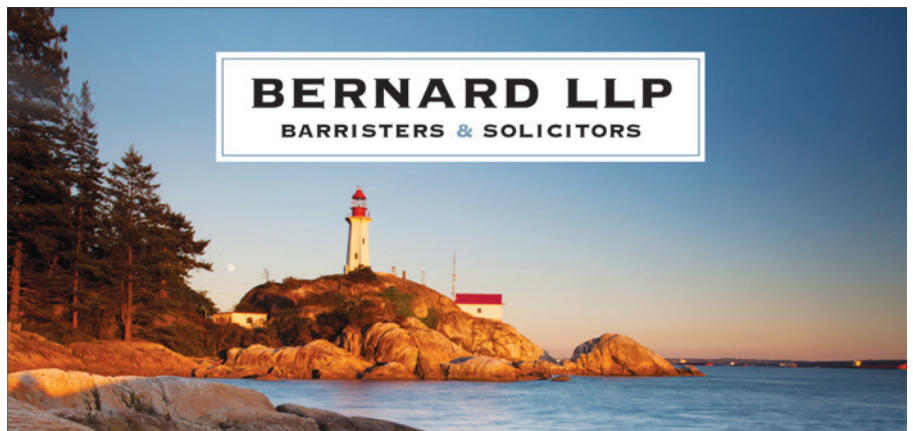
Quealey went on to say that “the future may involve new partnerships and expansion into other areas of community-based marine safety, but it will be contingent on the assurance of resources to make these efforts sustainable. We already ask a lot of our volunteers in terms of things like fundraising for capital investment for the fleet, and you can anticipate that we will be developing our

funding model to help alleviate some of that burden.”

This sense of building unity of effort across organizational boundaries is as important at the corporate level for RCMSAR as it is in the community context.

“Without the financial support of industry and the public, we are limited in our ability to sustain the quality of training and equipment for our crews that the West Coast currently enjoys,” said Quealey. “Our crews help make the coast a safer place for commercial traffic and keep recreational boaters informed of the hazards they face and the danger they can create in our busy ports and shipping lanes. RCMSAR crews are guardians of the coast and stand ready to support industry both from emergency response and prevention perspectives, now and in the future.”

*Christine Gross is the Manager of Fundraising with RCMSAR. She can be reached at [christine.gross@rcmsar.com](mailto:christine.gross@rcmsar.com). For more information on how to support RCMSAR, please visit [www.rcmsar.com](http://www.rcmsar.com).*



## BERNARD LLP

BARRISTERS & SOLICITORS

ASSISTING THE MARINE TRANSPORTATION, FISHING AND RECREATIONAL BOATING INDUSTRIES WITH COMMERCIAL, CORPORATE AND LITIGATION MATTERS ON CANADA’S WEST COAST AND THE CANADIAN ARCTIC

W. Gary Wharton	Peter Swanson	Thomas S. Hawkins	David K. Jones
Catherine A. Hofmann	David S. Jarrett	Tom Beasley	Connie Risi
Jason Hicks	Russell Robertson	Anne Amos-Stewart	Glen Krueger
Jakub Vodsedalek	Karissa Kelln	Harry Ormiston	

### ASSOCIATE COUNSEL:

Elyn M.R. Underhill      Lorna Pawluk, Q.C.

24/7 EMERGENCY RESPONSE: 604.681.1700 or [shipping@bernardllp.ca](mailto:shipping@bernardllp.ca)

TEL: 604.681.1700    WEB: [www.bernardllp.ca](http://www.bernardllp.ca)    EMAIL: (lawyer’s last name)@bernardllp.ca

ADDRESS: 1500-570 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6C 3P1