

May 1, 2013

Honourable Peter MacKay,

I am writing today following the release of the Federal Auditor General's report on Federal Search and Rescue Activities.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has repeatedly brought concerns regarding air and marine search and rescue services to the attention of both your office and the Federal Government in recent years.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has had serious concerns for some time with the provision of Search and Rescue (SAR) services in this province. We have a province and people which have traditionally made their livelihood from the sea in the fishing industry. Today, we continue to expand oil and gas developments and have renewed our presence in the offshore. This high level of attachment to maritime industries strengthens for us the importance of safety on our oceans.

As we have repeatedly highlighted to you and the Federal Government, our concerns relate to the high level capacity issues which have been evident in recent years and which were noted by the AG in his report. As well, the AG highlighted issues that are also concerning to us, including:

- availability and condition of equipment;
- deficiencies in the information management system;
- availability of sufficient properly trained and experienced personnel; and
- reaction times during SAR incidents.

We are concerned in particular that the current state of readiness does not reflect the busy periods of commercial fishing and recreational activity.

While we are encouraged to note that the Federal Government has accepted all recommendations in the Auditor General's report, it is now absolutely critical that action is taken immediately to ensure Search and Rescue resources are properly allocated based upon need rather than availability.

It is imperative to the people of this province that we have an opportunity to discuss how the Federal Government plans to start immediately implementing the recommendations in the AG report, and the timeframes within which proper solutions will be put in place.

This is an issue of vital importance for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and I therefore request a meeting with you to discuss these concerns urgently.

Sincerely,



KEVIN O'BRIEN  
Minister