

Thank you Madam Speaker.

Earlier this week, the entire province was shocked and saddened by the whalewatching tragedy in Tofino.

For a coastal people, accidents at sea are a constant danger.

My own grandfather was born near there – both he and my father were fishermen. My father and sister were once rescued at sea by strangers...

A lot of British Columbians have stories like that.

And while the attention of the world turned to Tofino – that's what they saw:

An entire community stepping up.

I went there yesterday to express my thanks to the community for rushing to help and rallying together –

especially the Ahousaht First Nation, who were first on the scene.

We're still learning exactly what happened. But in the meantime, we need to do two things.

First, Minister Yamamoto is going to work with the Ahousaht and other First Nations who have lived on the coast for millennia to help them be as prepared as they can possibly be for events like this.

That includes continuing our work to expand cell service.

Second, we need to recognize those individuals who demonstrated extraordinary courage and selflessness.

The people on the boat, both crew and passengers, who were brave and selfless in the face of danger.

One mother refused to be rescued before a pregnant woman – even though she had a broken leg.

The Ahousaht, who responded immediately, and put themselves in harm's way to save lives.

And the people of Tofino, for rallying around the victims and providing support.

I'm going to nominate Chief Councillor Greg Louie, and Mayor Josie Osborne to receive some of the first Medals for Good Citizenship on behalf of their communities.

There's a long road ahead. But we will be there for Tofino – the way they were there for each other.

From: s.22
Sent: Thursday, October 29, 2015 1:47 PM
To: OfficeofthePremier, Office PREM:EX
Subject: Ahousaht

Dear Premier Clark

I am writing to encourage the emergency services ministry to quickly implement the changes, as outlined by Premier Clark in her remarks after the whale watching boat tragedy, for the Ahousaht community.

Premier Christy Clark said the emergency services ministry will offer more search and rescue training for those called out to help in marine rescues. She said she will also encourage Telus to speed up delivery of fibre optic cellular service to the west coast.

I was surprised to read that there is no reliable cellular phone service in Ahousaht, even though the residents have long been promised it.

If the Ahousaht community, using their own boats, had not been there to respond to the signal flare for help the loss of life may have been far worse. As I understand it, 30 people from the Ahousaht's volunteer search and rescue group were out in seven boats. They picked up and carried many people to shore and then they plotted the currents and moved further offshore looking for floating survivors.

By the time the federal search and rescue group arrived on the scene, the boats of Ahousaht had scooped up the 21 survivors.

This community of people were ready to help, know the water and shoreline and are the best ones to respond to a disaster. They just need the resources to perform these heroic acts.

I would also like to ask the Ministry to include programs for traumatic incidence stress. Many of the Ahousaht people interviewed on TV news reports seemed to be suffering from the effects of traumatic incidence stress and if, in the future, they are going to be provided resources to respond to emergencies then it only follows that some people will carry the after effects of mental stress.

Thank you for your consideration of my email letter.

s.22