



September 23, 2013

HONOURABLE STEVE THOMSON

PO BOX 9049 STN PROV GOVT
VICTORIA BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Thomson;

On behalf of the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce I am writing to you today to convey our concerns for the recent decision to not renew the contract held by the Coulson Group in Port Alberni BC with respect to the use of the iconic Martin Mars Bomber.

Our community holds this aircraft and its value to all persons in BC and beyond in very high esteem. We believe that the aircraft continues to lend itself well to the control of forest fires anywhere in the Province. With upwards of 10 people directly employed by the company for the Martin Mars it simply makes no sense to us to discontinue the contract.

In addition to its capability in the air and in the battles it's won we also wish to confirm with you just what this aircraft means to the community itself with respect to locals and visitors alike. Some facts to consider:

- ✚ It is the world's largest water tanker. Why would we then move that designation elsewhere?
- ✚ The aircraft attracts thousands of visitors every year to Sproat Lake where they can view it on the water and if lucky they will even see it in action as it taxis along the waterway
- ✚ The economic benefit to Port Alberni hotels, restaurants, retailers etc. cannot be measured but it is very significant indeed.
- ✚ The aircraft is consistently being recruited by tourism based operations as an attraction to the area. Think May 22nd of this year when the only Cruise Ship to enter the Alberni Inlet was escorted out with a display of the Martin Mars wonder. The resultant comments from visitors on-board were very complimentary of everything Port Alberni yet the most mentioned and most fascinating aspect was the fly over and water drop by our iconic aircraft. And I add that this is only one event! We've had other cruise ships in the past and pretty much whenever asked the Coulson Group are more than pleased to offer up their equipment for the entertainment and fascination of the guests and residents of Port Alberni.

The Chamber of Commerce on behalf of the business community of Port Alberni clearly expresses its dissatisfaction and disagreement with the decision not to renew the contract.

Accordingly we invite you to speak at one of our upcoming Dinner Meetings where you can present the Government's position and rationale on the matter while allowing our member community the opportunity to discern the information and perhaps ask a few questions if time permits.

Again, we urge you and your staff to take a second look at this matter recognizing that there is much more to the decision than simply opting away from an expired contract.

Looking forward to your response and reconsideration, I remain,

Yours truly,
ALBERNI VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

William (Bill) Collette
Executive Director

cc: Wayne Coulson – Coulson Group
Teresa Bird - AVCOC President