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Elizabeth May
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Circonscription

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The Honourable Joanne Thompson
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

June 23, 2025

Re: Lighthouse Keeper Working Conditions and Compensation

Dear Minister,

I am writing out of growing concern for the wellbeing, safety, and fair treatment of Canada's lighthouse keepers. These workers live under remote and strenuous conditions to provide critical services. In this new parliament, I encourage you to act swiftly to assess and improve lighthouse keepers' working conditions, compensation, and protections.

As you may be aware, lighthouse keepers are not guaranteed minimum or maximum working hours. They frequently work twelve-hour shifts, seven days a week, often with only three to four weeks of annual vacation—enduring prolonged isolation and family separation. Leveraging technical expertise in light operations, they play vital roles in aerial navigation, maritime guidance, emergency response, and search and rescue operations.

Despite the essential nature of this work, underscored by growing public concern about transport safety, these workers do not receive the early retirement provisions or additional leave entitlements extended to other federal employees in similarly demanding roles, such as search and rescue technicians or firefighters. The impact of their service on personal mental and physical health is profound, and yet employees' compensation and benefits structure does not reflect this reality.

Of particular concern is lighthouse keepers' limited access to healthcare. Given the isolation of most stations, a single medical appointment routinely requires three full days away from station: one day to travel, one for the appointment, and one day to return, weather and transport availability permitting. Yet, lighthouse keepers are only granted 1.5 days of sick leave per month, forcing them to deplete vacation leave to access medically necessary supports.



Such generic policies for public workers, as applied to this workforce, are neither equitable nor sustainable. In consultation with lighthouse keepers and the Canadian Coast Guard, I urge the Ministry to consider increases to workers' vacation and sick leave entitlements, offering compensation for travel and appointment dates, and establishing an early retirement pension provision for lighthouse keepers to better reflect the psychological and physical toll of this work as well as its frontline contributions to public safety.

Our lighthouse keepers perform vital protection services for Canadians. It is time their service, dedication, and sacrifice are recognized.

Thank you for your consideration. I would look forward to discussing the matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth May', with a stylized, flowing script.

Elizabeth May, O.C.
Member of Parliament
Saanich – Gulf Islands
Leader of the Green Party of Canada

