



Opinion

We need recycling options for boats before they're abandoned



Transport Minister Marc Garneau tabled Bill C-64, to help prevent abandoned or hazardous vessels from littering Canada's shores, in October and it's now back to the House with proposed changes from the House Transport Committee. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



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Transport

There has been more attention lately on how to deal with abandoned vessels in Canada. Recently introduced federal legislation is a good step. The solution to clean up these boats and avoid this problem altogether is, however, not as simple as one would think, or hope.

Canada does not have good recycling options when boats reach their useful end. This is especially so when it comes to disposing of a commercial vessel, which is much more complicated and expensive than for a recreational boat. The options now for recreational boat owners are either to take their boat to a landfill or try to work with a local marina and recycle various boat parts. Although the vast majority of boat owners care about the environment and are responsible owners, their options to dispose of their vessels are limited.

A strong and enforceable licensing program providing accurate data on ownership and registration is a good start in addressing the issue. Due to lack of information, Canada does not

know how many boats are being abandoned or are nearing their useful end. Looking at recycling options in other countries, such as France, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Japan, is also important as these countries provide boat owners safe, reliable recycling options that Canada could emulate.

According to statistics gathered by the National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada, there are about 8.6 million recreational boats in use today with about 50 per cent of those being human powered, that is, they do not have engines. In 2017 alone, 39,000 new boats and 61,000 used boats were sold across Canada. The lifespan of a recreational boat is quite long. Requirements for construction standards and certification are high. The problem isn't so much

with new boats being built, which about half are aluminum, but with older boats.

As Canada's leading association representing the recreational boating industry at the national level both in Canada and United States, our member companies produce more than 80 per cent of the boats, engines, accessories, and gear North American boaters use. We are committed to a healthy environment and want our waterways clean and free for Canadians to enjoy. The federal government is working to find a solution to abandoned and wrecked vessels. We are happy to see this; it's long overdue.

Sara Anghel is president of the National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada.

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