

Shipping brings the whole world closer together

Some 80 per cent of all goods are carried by sea, Kaity Arsoniadis-Stein says.

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Happy World Maritime Day! Around the world and across the seas, ports, shipping companies and more than a million seafarers on 50,000plus merchant ships will be celebrating seaborne trade on World Maritime Day.

Canadians, and especially British Columbians, should take note, too. The ships we see anchored off Vancouver's English Bay are not just part of our spectacular scenery — they represent so much more.

Whether they know it or not, all Canadians are closely connected to the shipping industry. That's because 80 per cent of the world's global trade by volume is carried by sea, meaning if you use or consume a product that was produced elsewhere, chances are it arrived here by ship. The Port of Vancouver is the largest in Canada and the third-largest in North America by total tonnage of goods shipped.

The former secretary general of the International Maritime Organization, Efthymios Mitropoulos, captured it best: "Without shipping, half the world would freeze and the other half would starve."

Last week in Vancouver, the Vancouver International Maritime Centre marked the day with a conference introducing members of the city's business community to some of the world's shipping leaders such as Kathy Metcalf, the president and CEO of the Chamber of Shipping of America, Lloyd's List deputy editor Craig Eason and global branding expert Peter Economides.

The focus of the conference was that there is much more to the shipping industry than just shipping. While Canada's maritime industry revolves around port activity, **for each crew member on the container vessels, tankers, bulkers and cruise ships entering our harbours, there is a growing number of people on shore providing a wide range of services such as legal, accounting, banking, financing, insurance, ship management, brokering and business development.**

The VIMC is working hard to encourage more international shipping companies to establish or expand their operations in Metro Vancouver. By doing so, we can generate millions in local investment and create hundreds of high-paying, long-term professional services jobs for the region. Along the way, we can also establish Vancouver as a global maritime hub serving the Pacific Rim and beyond.

Graham Clarke, the chairman and CEO of the VIMC, says the strategy is already paying off. After introducing ourselves and our campaign to the shipping world over the past year, we've succeeded in attracting two international shipping firms, Greystoke and AAL, to Vancouver and signed an agreement with the University of the Aegean of Greece. Further announcements are coming soon.

The keys to our success include the strong support of B.C. Minister of International Trade Teresa Wat, Finance Minister Michael de Jong and the provincial government, which provided the VIMC with \$3 million in funding over the next three years. Also instrumental is the support of federal Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Minister Navdeep Bains and the government of Canada, which this month announced \$2 million to support our efforts.

As a region, we offer international shipping companies numerous advantages and incentives such as political stability; direct air, rail, road and maritime connections to the largest markets in North America; a regulatory regime that eliminates or reduces shipping-related taxes; a stable banking system; a time zone that allows companies to communicate with three continents on a given day; a world-leading livability ranking; and a talented, multilingual workforce that offers the wide range of professional services required to support the shipping sector.

In the years ahead, the volume of trade carried by sea will continue to increase and the VIMC is making the most of this significant regional and national economic opportunity. And that's worth celebrating.