



## RESOLUTION 2022-03

### **Mandatory Wearing of Lifejackets or Personal Flotation Devices (PDFs) While in Vessels Under Six Meters**

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**WHEREAS** keeping Canadians safe on our waterways by the reduction of preventable drownings through the mandatory use of lifejackets and personal flotation devices (PFD) on recreational vessels under six (6) meters, and

**WHEREAS** the *Canada Shipping Act 2001* (CSA 2001) is the principal federal legislation governing the safety of marine transportation and recreational boating in Canada. It is regulated by Transport Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and

**WHEREAS** the Small Vessel Regulations inside of the CSA 2001 manage the safety equipment, carriage, and construction requirements for small vessels – which include all recreational vessels (pleasure crafts) and small work and passenger-carrying commercial vessels (non-pleasure crafts), and

**WHEREAS** in Canada, all motorized and non-motorized pleasure crafts are required to have lifejackets or PFDs on board their vessel when underway. Currently, there is no requirement to wear a lifejacket or PFD (Canada Shipping Act 2001, Small Vessel Regulations – Part 2), and

**WHEREAS** it is estimated that there are 1.26 million powered pleasure crafts registered in Canada, with 4.8 million people that have obtained their Pleasure Craft Operator Card (PCOC) (Vessels propelled by muscular power do not require the operator to have a license). It is estimated that 12.4 million adult Canadians go boating every year (reference by the Economic Impact of Recreational Boating in Canada report prepared by the National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada (NMMA)), and

**WHEREAS** the Canadian Safe Boating Council (CSBC) struck a Lifejacket/PFD Taskforce to review & develop options concerning increased wear rates amongst recreational boaters in 2002. A detailed Research Paper *Will it Float?* was presented in 2003. In summary, the document identified the following key findings:

- Drowning rates are extremely in Canada
- Not wearing a PFD/lifejacket is the most significant risk factor
- Cold shock and swim failure are significant factors and are not understood by most boaters

- Boats less than 6 meters are the focus due to higher drowning rates in this category
- Wearing is the answer, not carriage
- Behavioural Campaigns are not enough
- Public opinion is supportive of increased wear
- Enforcement agencies have indicated that enforcement of wear regulations would be easier than current carriage regulations.

The CSBC continues to pursue standards for PFD wear. In January 2008, they surveyed boating organizations to gain support for mandatory wear legislation. Although there seemed to be public support, they did not gain support from the marine industry, and

**WHEREAS** according to *The Drowning Report – 2020 Edition* produced by the Lifesaving Society of Canada, 87% of all boaters who drowned were not wearing a lifejacket or PFD. Capsizing and falling overboard were major contributors to the death, and

**WHEREAS** in the summer of 2021, CSBC initiated a study called *Research the Floats* (RTF) to determine the lifejacket wear rate on 4 major waterways in Ontario. It was learned that 75% of all boaters were not wearing a lifejacket or PFD while on their vessel, and 63% of the vessels observed were under six meters in length, and

**WHEREAS** the Drowning Prevention Research Center of Canada reports that from 2008 to 2020, Ontario represents just over one-third (34%) of all recreational boating fatalities in Canada. This is followed by Quebec (20%) and British Columbia (18%). The main contributing factor was capsizing and falling overboard, and

**WHEREAS** marine fatalities investigated by the Ontario Provincial Police continue to identify that not wearing a lifejacket or PFD is a contributing factor to the deaths of the vessel occupants. In the last 11 years of data, 226 of 260 (87%) of all deceased involved in boating fatalities were not wearing a lifejacket or PFD and of those fatalities, 84% were in vessels under 6 meters. Capsizing and falling overboard were the major contributing factors to the deaths, and

**WHEREAS** lifejacket and PFD wear has typically been hard to promote due to the lack of comfort and bulkiness of the item. Technology and design today permit the boater to wear a lifejacket or PFD securely and comfortably for a long period without the risk of heat exhaustion. These items include inflatable PFDs, pouch-style PFDs, paddle vest-style PFDs and floatation jackets, and

**WHEREAS** lifejacket/PFD wear campaigns, as well as strong social media messaging continue to educate the public about the benefits of wearing a Lifejacket or PFD, but it has not translated into a significant behavior change –

particularly with adult age groups. The OPP reports that between the age groups of 25 to 65, over 62% of the fatalities are represented in this category– with 91% being male, and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) calls on the Government of Canada to amend the *Canada Shipping Act 2001* to make it mandatory for the wearing of lifejackets or PFDs by all operators and passengers in all sizes and types of recreational vessels that are self-propelled by muscular power (canoes, kayaks, stand up paddleboards, etc.) and all other powered vessels that are under 6 meters in length while underway.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the OACP calls on the Government of Ontario to create provincial legislation to make it mandatory for the wearing of lifejackets or PFDs by all operators and passengers in all sizes and types of recreational vessels that are self-propelled by muscular power (canoes, kayaks, stand up paddleboards, etc.) and all other powered vessels that are under six meters in length while underway.