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THE CANADIAN COAST GUARD

(Prepared by the Canadian Coast Guard, Ministry of Transport,
Ottawa.)

The Canadian Coast Guard has played a vital part in the nation's development since Confederation, although it has been known by its present name only since January 26, 1962.

Before Confederation, several provincial fleets operated independently. These were brought together as a single marine service in 1867 and became the embryo of the fleet which is now the responsibility of the Ministry of Transport. From a small beginning, the fleet has expanded into an organization comprising more than 140 vessels of all types, of which 60 are watchkeeping ships. These include nine full icebreakers and nine other ships in the category of light icebreaking lighthouse and buoy tenders.

The Canadian Coast Guard was never an armed service in the strict sense. In the period before the First World War, however, some Marine Service ships employed as fisheries-protection cruisers carried small guns that were also used for naval training. To this extent, the Marine Service of the former Department of Marine and Fisheries anticipated the Naval Service Act by which, in 1910, the Royal Canadian Navy was brought into existence.

The Marine Service, then principally engaged in lighthouse and buoy operations and in some icebreaking during the early winter, has since been occupied with the business of keeping shipping channels safely marked and in search-and-rescue operations.

Modernization and expansion to its present size and strength has occurred within the past few years as a result of two principal factors — the development of a sudden new demand for icebreaker support for shipping in the Canadian Arctic and new industrial development of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, creating a requirement for icebreaker assistance to shipping throughout the winter.

At the same time, marine search-and-rescue activities increased. In addition to the needs of commercial shipping and the fishing industry, there was a growing safety problem arising from the expansion of pleasure-boating across Canada.