

AMP FILES

Evacuation of Civilians  
File NO. W-412-3 No. 1  
1941-1942

C O P Y

EVACUATION

March 29, 1942.

The Honourable John Hart,  
Premier of British Columbia,  
Victoria, B. C.

Dear Mr. Hart:

On Wednesday last, March 25th, while in Victoria you will recall asking me to visit Major-General Alexander, and accompanied by Inspector S. F. M. Moodie I spent an hour with him discussing chiefly the matter of evacuation of Vancouver Island if the emergency for such action arose.

Major-General Alexander pointed out that all preliminary arrangements for evacuation were of a Civilian Protection nature and should be handled by the Committee charged with this responsibility.

To even plan the movement of, let us say, 100,000 women and children from Vancouver Island, is a tremendous task but I believe we fully realize the need for completing the most detailed plan for such an emergency with the least possible delay because it would certainly be too late when enemy action started.

I informed Major-General Alexander that I had already gathered certain data in connection with the rolling stock of all railways on Vancouver Island, including logging roads, because I felt the Island Highway itself would most likely be closed to everything except the movement of armed forces, and in this he concurred. There are only two methods of moving the people from the Island, and that is by plane or boat, and the first one is of course almost out of the question. The large boats such as those belonging to the Canadian Pacific Railway would most likely be required for armed forces movement also so we would have to rely on small boats. I pointed out to Major-General Alexander we could take over the five or six hundred Japanese fishing boats now lying anchored and idle in the Fraser River and station these at a number of selected embarkation

points from Victoria along the entire east coast of the Island, and by having trained personnel to operate these we could move thousands of people very rapidly because these boats would hold from forty to as many as sixty people for such emergency use. He thought this was an excellent idea and worthy of the fullest consideration.

Without going into the detail of our lengthy conversation, Major-General Alexander suggested that a small Committee be set up to study this matter at once, to which he would appoint liaison officers from the Navy and the Army who would be sufficiently informed as to be able to tell us just what the requirements and plans of the armed forces would be so that we could more effectively plan our work from a civilian point of view. It was agreed that sometime early next week Major-General Alexander would come to Vancouver and meet with this small Committee to point out to them the seriousness of this matter and the need for the most careful and rapid planning for such an emergency.

When the present Advisory Council was set up it was contemplated that we would immediately apply ourselves to a study of Civilian Protection from the point of view of servicing the now existing 130 A.R.P. Committees throughout British Columbia but we certainly had not contemplated taking on such a major job as would be involved in actually dealing with evacuation on such a large scale. I agreed with Major-General Alexander that this is a Civilian Protection matter, and if you will instruct me that it is your wish that we undertake this problem as well as that already assigned to us we will gladly do so, and I feel sure that within thirty days we will be able to complete the plan and certainly have an organization in existence that would carry it out.

The reason I am writing you at such length is that this will involve an expenditure of a very considerable sum of money, and you will undoubtedly be discussing this matter with the Hon. Ian Mackenzie, Hon. J. L. Ralston, and the Hon. C. G. Power, who are due on the Coast this weekend. One item alone of commissioning these boats and keeping them in operating condition would amount to somewhere in the neighborhood of \$200,000.00 annually, because we could easily understand that it would cost \$25.00 per month to supervise and keep in good condition one of these boats, which, on the basis of \$300.00 per year, would reach the sum above mentioned. At least an additional \$100,000.00 to \$150,000.00 would be required for establishing and training personnel apart from the large voluntary group that we could enlist to work during any emergency.

Up to date you have empowered our Committee to proceed with the work as planned in our budget to you amounting to some \$152,000.00, and as you will be discussing the Federal Government participation in that budget, might I respectfully suggest you discuss this larger problem with the Ministers referred to and see what help they would be willing to give the Provincial Government in that regard.

Major-General Alexander has been given power under Section 32 of the Defence of Canada Regulations to act in connection with evacuation, and I am attaching a copy of letter dated March 26th from the Department of National Defence at Esquimalt notifying him to this effect.

So that you will get some idea of just what a large task faces us I am going to outline the problem briefly as I see it. Please understand that this is not by any means a final plan because it would take considerable study and would have to be worked out in the greatest detail.

The question of evacuation has been divided in this preliminary outline to five main phases. It might be necessary to completely evacuate the civilian population of certain areas, or the evacuation might be only partial and confined to invalids, women, children, aged, etc. The five phases referred to are as follows.

(1) MILITARY PHASE:

Defence authorities will designate extent of evacuation.

- (b) Certain routes and means of communication must be kept open for armed forces.

(2) CIVILIAN PROTECTION PHASE (Auxiliary Police)

Control of evacuation from point of view of traffic and enforcement of all approved regulations.

(3) RED CROSS PHASE (Disaster Relief)

Comfort and care of evacuees.

- (a) First aid and medical.
- (b) Feeding.
- (c) Clothing.
- (d) Housing.
- (e) Provision of transport to concentration points and at dispersal points.
- (f) Registration.
- (g) Communication. (Disaster Relief only)

(4) CONTROL COMMITTEE:

- (a) Chairman, Advisory Council.
- (b) Naval Representative.
- (c) Army Representative.
- (d) Inspector of Civilian Protection.
- (e) Representative of Red Cross.

(5) METHOD OF OPERATION:

A. Personnel as required.

- 1. Army as ordered.
- 2. Navy as ordered.
- 3. Police, specially trained auxiliary police.
- 4. Red Cross, First Aid, Drivers, trained welfare personnel.

B. Selection of concentration points, boat, train, bus, or car.

C. Equipment - boats, train, bus, cars, etc.

D. Selection of dispersal points.

- 1. Intermediate.
- 2. Final.

I discussed this important matter with the Attorney-General over the telephone today and for that reason I did not telephone you, which I fully intended to do. A copy of this letter has been given to the Attorney-General and I am also sending a copy to Major-General Alexander.

Let me assure you that I share the views of yourself and Major-General Alexander that there is real danger of incendiarism from one end of Vancouver Island to another if we are faced with enemy attack, and the most complete preparation should be made for this emergency.

I will await further instructions from you but can assure you that we are ready and prepared to organize this work as part of Civilian Protection.

Yours very truly,

*W. A. Manning*

CHAIRMAN - ADVISORY COUNCIL.

WCM/K  
Encl.