



NL

# Placentia Bay rescue recognized 41 years later

Inquiry a year later blamed panic and indecision for deaths

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Loyola Pomroy was recognized on Thursday, for his efforts in a July 1972 rescue in Placentia Bay. (CBC)



It was the perfect example of 'better late than never' — recognition of a Placentia Bay rescue that took place 41 years ago.

On Thursday, the Canadian Red Cross recognized Capt. Ray Berkshire and Loyola Pomroy who were involved in a rescue in July 1972.

Pomroy, who was 24 at the time, was one of 15 passengers on the schooner Delroy crossing from Merasheen to Arnold's Cove.



They'd almost reached Arnold's Cove when a fire broke out in the engine room.

There was no life boat on the schooner, just a dory and only one life jacket.

Pomroy said he was asleep when the fire hit.

"Mom woke me up ... there was a smell of smoke, and everyone was shouting fire. Everybody was just rushing to get away. I can't recall exactly whether it was panic or urgency, but it was quite a scene there for a while," he said.

Pomroy said the men were quickly clearing out the dory, while the schooner was still steaming ahead. By this point, the fire was pretty intense.

"When the dory was lowered, everyone got in, and she immediately capsized. Everybody went into the water. Although it was a moonlit night, and you could see dark objects in the water, you couldn't tell who was who ... some were alive and some were already dead. Some were 50 feet away," said Pomroy.

"Both my mother and my aunt were together, and they were still floating. I gave my mother artificial respiration, I had to let my aunt go ... but unfortunately Mom didn't survive either, so I eventually had to let Mom go as well."

Pomroy knew the chances of his younger siblings surviving were not good.

"By then my two sisters and my brother were also gone ... they were six, eight and 12-years-old and couldn't swim, so we pretty well knew at that stage that they were gone as well."

Pomroy did manage to help another sister and a cousin back to the upturned dory.

He said no one would have survived if not for Capt. Ray Berkshire.

"He is truly the man of the hour, and deserves the recognition," said Pomroy.

Berkshire was at the helm of another schooner on the bay that night, en route to Arnold's Cove.

Berkshire saw an orange glow and decided to investigate. He located the burned-out vessel and kept circling in the darkness until he found the surviving six.

"I tried to get the boat on the radio, but couldn't. After we got to the boat, there was no lifeboat ... and so we circled around and around, and after around 20 minutes, we finally saw the dory. They were really happy to see us, and so was I," Berkshire said.

When asked by CBC News about formal recognition, Berkshire said he was pleased.

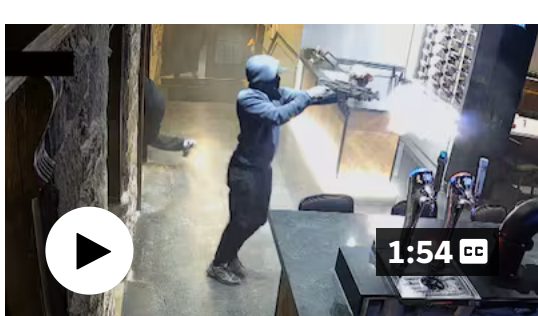
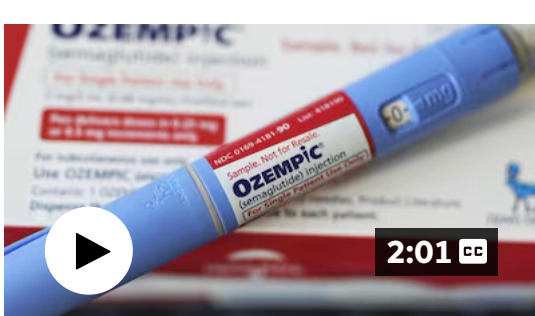
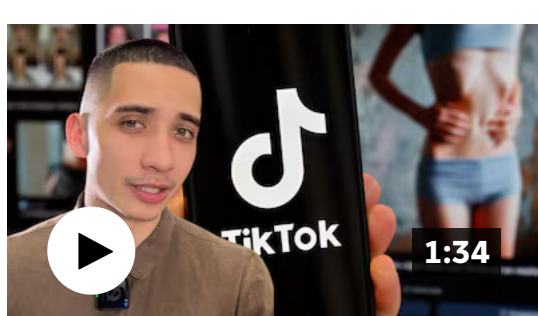
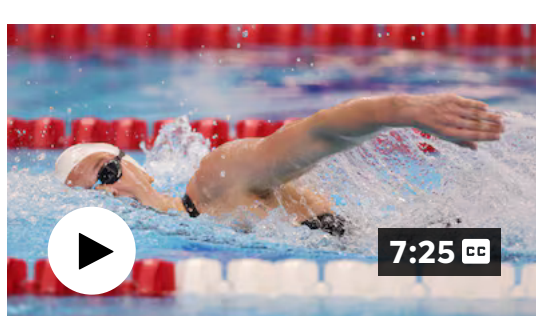
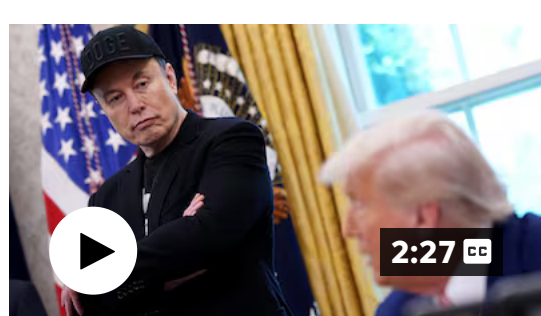
"I'm certainly happy for the recognition, although I never looked for it too much, really. I've gone back there for years and years after that, and you try not to think about it all the time. Life goes on," he said.

There was an inquiry a year later, which blamed panic and indecision for the deaths.

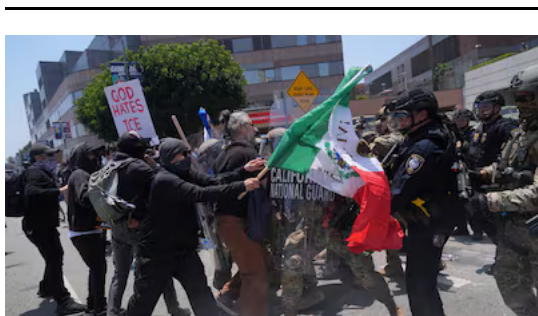

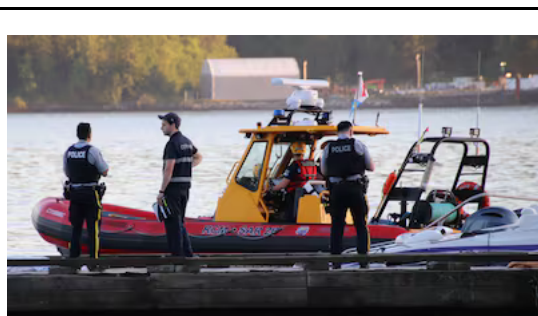

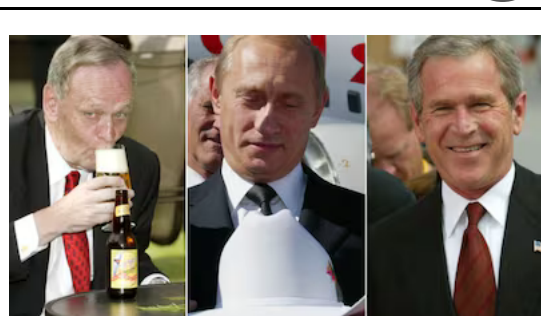






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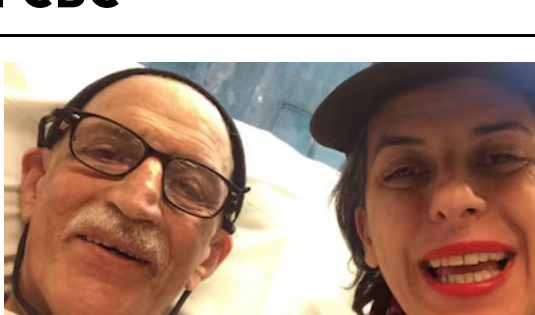


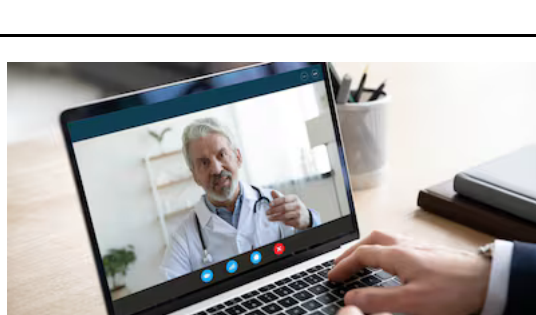
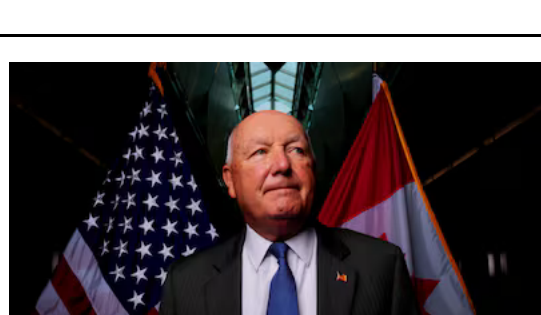
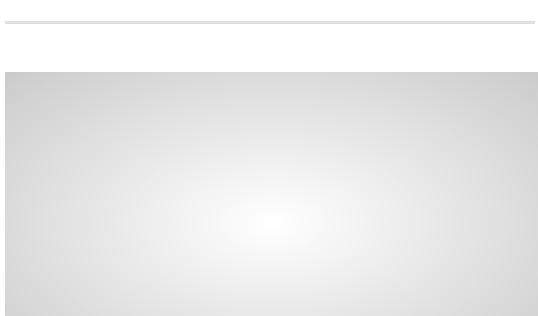
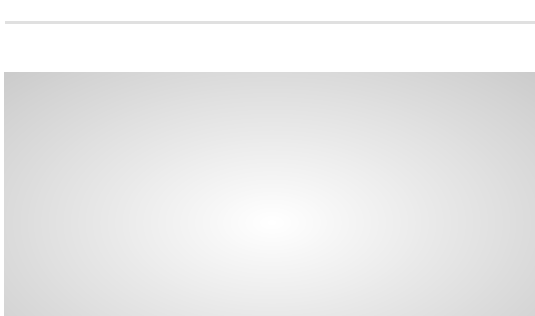
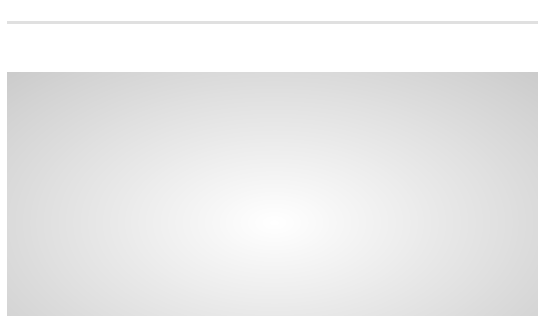
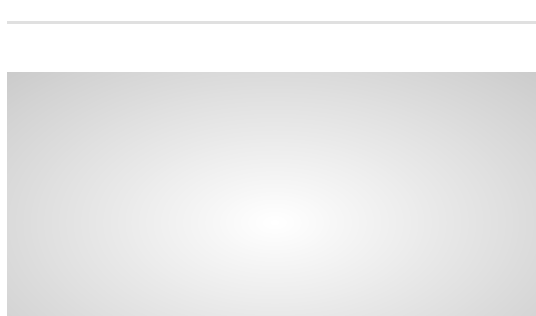
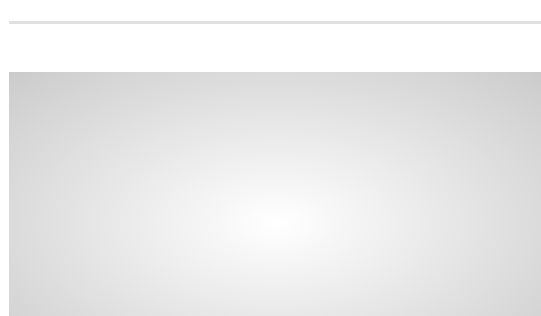


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